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THE STRUGGLE

OF

THE BULGARIANS

FOR

NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

UNDER

PRINCE ALEXANDER

A MILITARY AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE WAR BETWEEN BULGARIA AND SERVIA IN 1885

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

OF

MAJOR A. VON HUHN

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PREFACE.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER the outbreak of the Revolt at Philippopolis I went to Bulgaria, sent by the 'Cologne Gazette,' and there I found an opportunity of watching the political and warlike events on the spot. I arrived without any prejudice, as a calm dispassionate observer, and I could have taken part quite as much for as against the Bulgarians; in fact, at the moment of my departure the latter seemed the more probable, as the general view that Bulgaria and her Prince had imperilled weighty European interests appeared to me to be only too well justified. But what I heard and saw there left no doubt in my mind that the Bulgarian movement could not be stopped by the means adopted by international diplomacy, and that it, moreover, did not harm any real European interests. I was able to satisfy myself that the policy carried on by the agents of Russia had been discreditable and worthy of the severest condemnation, and that is why I go against Russia. I am no Russophobe; I have defended Russian

interests often enough, and shall, I dare say, do so again under different circumstances, but to side with Russia in the Bulgarian question is simply a matter of impossibility for any man of independent and honest views, and gifted with a sense of justice.

On the other hand, the devotion and perseverance with which the Bulgarians carried on their fight for liberty deserved the fullest recognition and sympathy, whilst the attitude of Prince Alexander, who is a wise statesman, a brave soldier, a remarkable man in every respect, commanded admiration.

I would wish to show to more distant circles that this opinion is not based on preconceived notions, but that it has its justification in convincing facts,—for which reason I have written this book.

A. VON HUHN.

PARIS : *April* 1886.

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THE most substantial result of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–78 was the creation of two new States, of which the one, the Principality of Bulgaria, although remaining nominally under Turkish suzerainty, became in reality quite an independent State—at least with respect to Turkey—whilst the other, the autonomous province of Eastern Roumelia, although retaining a closer connection with Turkey, also, as a matter of fact, did not pay the slightest attention to the Sultan's commands.

When the Berlin Congress upset the Treaty of San

Stefano and put up in its place the dual State of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia—a special name had to be invented for the latter—no one with any knowledge of the situation could entertain the slightest doubt that an experiment was being made the result of which might, to say the least of it, be doubtful. On the one side the Congress, with that aversion to radical solutions which is the special characteristic of such diplomatic assemblies, had failed to satisfy the Russian and Bulgarian desires for the unification of the people. By that action it had created a situation which carried with it the germs of future complications, and which can only be designated as an incomplete piece of patchwork. On the other side it had given a nation an almost entire political independence, although that nation occupied a very low place in the scale of development, and apparently could offer no guarantees that it would govern itself in future in a befitting manner. One can readily understand this by picturing to one's self what the condition of North and South Bulgaria was when they were separated from Turkey by the sword of Russia and the dictum of the Powers. Up to then, these two Turkish provinces were as good as unknown in more distant circles, and were no less capable of 'being discovered' than many a country in the 'Dark Continent' is at the present day. No doubt a good deal had been written about them; I would only recall that excellent book by Field-Marshal von Moltke; but still, Bulgaria had not

yet found its way into the minds and sympathies of the great public. This was suddenly changed when the Russo-Turkish war placed that country in the front rank of European interest, and when journalism, so completely transformed as compared with former times, poured its news from Bulgaria into Europe through a hundred channels. At that time I also, as a correspondent of the 'Cologne Gazette,' found my way into Bulgaria in the wake of the Russians, and spent nearly ten months there, partly occupied in following the progress of the military operations, partly in studying the country and its people.

Not because my natural inclination makes me start with Adam and Eve, and conduct the reader through a formidable array of historical dates which would easily be found in other places, but because it is essential as a foundation for the narrative of the later development of Bulgaria, I would wish to add here a short description of the conditions as I found them at that time during my wanderings in Bulgaria. My first impression was, that on closer inspection this 'cruelly oppressed and enslaved' people were living in a state of opulence and prosperity which showed no traces either of slavery or of cruel oppression. I was by no means the only one who made this discovery, which came upon all Russian officers and soldiers with irresistible force, and which the latter often commented upon in a curious manner. They had started upon their crusade—for it was a crusade, a war

of Christendom against Islamism—with the object of defending their persecuted co-religionists, their compatriots so cruelly despoiled of their property, against those very Turks for whom Mr. Gladstone later on coined the adjective 'unspeakable.' For their sakes they had talked themselves into a kind of religious and national enthusiasm, and how often did I now hear the words, 'Why, the Bulgarians are much better off than we are, and our peasants would be only too glad to exchange with them!' And indeed such an exchange would have been no bad bargain for the Russian peasants.

The longer I stayed in the country, the more evidence I found of the fact that it was not only well-to-do in all its districts, but wealthy, very wealthy indeed in some, although this wealth, so far from being displayed with ostentation, was carefully hidden from view. Nowhere, I repeat it emphatically, nowhere did I find actual destitution, and as far as material advantages were concerned, the Russians might well have abstained from their liberation. In the same way, I never obtained authentic proof that the Turks had persecuted the Christian religion in Bulgaria; I never came across any Christian churches that had been demolished, and the Bulgarian priests were apparently quite as well cared for as those in other countries. An irrefutable proof of the wealth of the country is to be found in the fact that Bulgaria provided sustenance out of its own means for

the entire Russian army through six whole months, for the amount of supplies sent across the Danube by the Russian commissariat was small, and even that was for the most part useless. The accounts of the religious persecutions are refuted in the most unquestionable manner by the single fact that, after many centuries of Turkish rule, the Christian religion not only existed, but was able to exercise all its rites in the fullest way. Or does anybody doubt that the Turks, a hundred years ago, had the power to exterminate Christianity if they had so willed? One may well say that the decline of Turkey was caused by her religious toleration, and that this best and noblest of attributes has been but poorly requited, as indeed one seldom sees the old moral of the story-books, about rewarding the good and punishing the wicked, applied in history.

I have said that Bulgaria is a rich country, but this should be qualified to some extent, inasmuch as the wealth of Bulgaria exclusively consisted, and still consists to this day, in agriculture. Her industries, apart from a few home industries, are hardly developed at all, and her commerce was still very backward, being moreover chiefly in the hands of non-Bulgarians, principally Greeks and Jews. This absence of commercial and industrial activity was the cause that, with the exception of a few towns on the Danube, mostly of international character, no prominent centres were formed, without which it will never be possible to advance.

The want of proper means of communication, the Turkish misrule affecting Christians and Mahomedans alike, in the course of centuries paralysed the peasant in his agricultural pursuits, and prevented him from striving to ameliorate his condition, which at any rate was supportable as far as material comforts went. A single great Turk had tried with a strong hand to rouse the people from their lethargy, and to incite them to begin a vigorous modern life. Whatever Bulgaria then possessed in the shape of public institutions and means of communication she owed entirely to Midhat Pasha, and who can tell how far this powerful and advanced mind would have brought the country if he had been permitted to remain at its head for a score of years? As it was, Bulgaria was nothing but a State for the most part composed of quite uneducated peasants, and in which only very few intelligent and cultured men were to be found, so few, in fact, that one could easily have counted them on one's fingers. It was with a perfect right that the question was raised, how this country, left to its own resources, would be able to govern itself? and the answer, that the Russians would no doubt see to that, was not calculated to give universal satisfaction. Prosperous, frugal, pretty industrious, and decidedly uneducated—as such they seemed well suited to form a Russian province, but as to constituting a Bulgarian State! . . .

In addition to this, the sympathy of civilised Europe

had been alienated from the Bulgarians on account of the unspeakable ferocity and cruelty which they showed in the persecution and massacre of the unfortunate Turks, who, from the day the Russian troops marched in, found themselves at the mercy of their pitiless tormentors. Later on in this book I shall so often have cause to speak well of the Bulgarians, that I thereby acquire a right to stigmatise their infamous conduct of that time as it deserves. Above 100,000 unfortunate people, men, women, and children, were slaughtered by them, not only from a feeling of national and religious hatred, but very often for the purpose of common spoliation. It was a terrible stain on the escutcheon of that nation, and it is fortunate for them that the latest events make it possible, if not to forget the past, at least to draw a veil over it.

If the powers at the Berlin Congress did not give, relatively speaking, much thought to the future development of things in Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia, probably the main reason was, that they thought Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia were destined in the course of time to become Russian provinces or dependencies. They had altered the treaty of San Stefano, as far as Bulgaria was concerned, in the letter, and had therefore all the less compunction in allowing it to be carried out in the spirit. Russia had intended to turn the liberated countries into a half-way house and advanced post for her march to Constantinople. She was now left to

settle down in comfort in that advanced position, and to form a van for her army, waiting for more propitious times.

Thus Europe had not stopped the progress of Russia, but merely retarded it; in fact, it had even given her a better basis of operations for the resumption of her ambitious plans. If, later on, much came about in a different way, it is not the merit of Europe. Let us glance back rapidly at the development of the Bulgarian twin-States. In Bulgaria there first ruled, as Governor-General, Prince Dondukoff-Korsakoff, who was at great pains to organise a purely Russian administration, and to prepare everything in a manner that the newly-elected young ruler, Prince Alexander of Battenberg, should find a groundwork and guide for his future conduct. The most curious of Prince Dondukoff's creations was the Bulgarian constitution, which is one of the most liberal in all Europe, and which secured to the country not only a constitutional, but an almost purely parliamentary government. There is considerable uncertainty as to what were the reasons that induced Prince Dondukoff to give to Bulgaria, a perfectly new-born State, a constitution such as many of the old States in Europe are not yet ripe for, and for which the Russians are evidently considered by their Government to be totally unripe. Did Dondukoff foresee the probability of future differences between Russia and the Prince of Bulgaria, and did he then count upon playing off the

Parliament against the Prince, or, in the other case, the Prince against the Parliament? One thing is certain, that Dondukoff was not by any means convinced either of the necessity or of the durability of his constitution, for when a Bulgarian once pointed out to him that by this constitution a young nation had been given too far-reaching rights, he laughingly exclaimed, '*Comme vous êtes naïf, mon cher! les constitutions, c'est comme les jolies femmes, elles ne demandent qu'à être violées!*' And so, Prince Alexander of Battenberg, the constitutional Prince, Alexander I., 'by the Grace of God and the Will of the Nation,' made his entry into Bulgaria as a Russian *protégé*, full of good cheer, prepared for many an unpleasantness, but certainly not dreaming of the crown of thorns which the government of Bulgaria would become during six long years.

While Prince Dondukoff was organising Bulgaria in this manner, the representatives of the Powers at Philippopolis prepared an 'Organic Statute,' which may be looked upon as the constitution for Eastern Roumelia. Here also care was taken to have a representation of the people, endowed with extraordinary rights, which was quite capable of embittering the existence of the Turkish Governor-General, if he should by any chance ever recall the fact that he was one of the Sultan's officials. However, one is bound in justice to them to admit that neither of the two governors, Aleko Pasha Vogorides and Gavril Pasha Krestowitch, ever did recall

this fact, but that they concentrated their thoughts on maintaining themselves as long as possible in their richly and regularly paid posts. Over them and the National Assembly there hovered, as a guiding-spirit, the Czar's representative, the Russian Consul-General at Philippopolis, until the influence of Russia was destroyed by her own creatures.

It will be possible to consider the development of both countries, Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia, during the following interval of six years, simultaneously, for though the Berlin Congress had separated them externally, they maintained the closest connection internally, and every event that occurred in the one country produced a reaction in the other. One can say that in the first years the Russian influence was the only effective one, and as the separation of the two countries, and their remaining under Turkish suzerainty, had been carried through against the will of Russia, all the efforts of Russia were directed towards loosening those relations with the Ottoman Empire, whilst bringing the destinies of the two countries in the closest possible connection with Russia, so that the latter should become the real suzerain in the place of Turkey, both countries forming Russian provinces as regards administration, and the armed forces of both acting as an advanced guard for Russia, ever ready to lend powerful aid to an attack on Turkey, but incapable of offering any resistance to the Russian power. Eastern Roumelia was to be

worked through the Consul-General, and Bulgaria through Prince Alexander, who was designated as '*bon jeune Prince*,' and considered quite incapable of any independent action. That the latter assumption was a mistaken one, the history of the last few months has shown; nevertheless, I believe that Russia's plan of binding the two countries indissolubly to herself could have succeeded if the Russians had manifested any regard for the just claims of the Bulgarians, and especially if they had not been so particularly unlucky in the choice of the instruments of their policy. Bulgaria was not on the level of a tribe of Turkomans, who can simply be ruled with the knout; if others did not know that, it was excusable, but Russia, of whose Eastern policy Bulgaria forms the pivot, was bound to keep herself accurately informed on that point. The exact opposite was the case.

At first all went well, that is, exactly as Russia wished it. Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia showed by public manifestations that they considered the Sultan's suzerainty as non-existent, and in their attempts to stand out against it they enjoyed the Czar's protection. There was no mention made of the taking over of a portion of the national debt, as settled at the Berlin Congress; Bulgaria paid no tribute at all, Eastern Roumelia only a very insufficient and irregular one, and, whenever the 'Sublime Porte' wished to interfere in any way with the administration in accordance with

existing treaties, she made the discovery that her 'loyal subjects' were prepared to ignore her wishes with the greatest possible indifference.

How little influence the Sultan, 'the Ruler of the Faithful,' had in those countries was shown very plainly by the fact that the hard-hearted and unjust treatment of the Mahomedans was quietly continued, and that in those 'Turkish provinces' they were looked upon as Pariahs, beyond the pale of the law, whose property was as little safe as their lives. Fortunately, this has become much better of late years, and, at least in Bulgaria, Prince Alexander's personal influence had already before the war made it possible for the Turks in that country to lead a life worthy of human beings. For this they have not been wanting in gratitude towards him. They owe this amelioration of their condition entirely to the Prince personally, and not to the influence of Turkey, which at that time was positively nil in Bulgaria.

After the termination of the war, it was both natural and inevitable that the Russians should fill nearly all the higher posts in the administration and the army, since there was an almost complete absence of individuals capable of filling them, and, moreover, everything had to be created anew.

Considering the suspicion with which the Bulgarian views every foreigner, the Russian Government ought to have given especial attention to the choice of its

officials and officers, and only to have sent the best and most capable men, who could have instilled into the minds of the Bulgarians real love and esteem for Russia. Instead of this, they frequently sent individuals who had 'come to grief,' or privileged persons to whom they wanted to give the benefit of the high salaries paid by the Bulgarians, without any regard to their qualifications. The consequences of this proceeding were not long in showing themselves, and in a few short years an unmistakable aversion against their liberators became noticeable amongst the Bulgarians, which soon assumed the shape of an ardent desire to be rid of them as speedily as possible. The Bulgarian is by nature very parsimonious, and the habits of the Russian officers and officials, which very frequently were not in accordance with these principles, hurt his feelings all the more, as he well knew that it was *his* money that was being squandered in that way. Moreover, the Russians did not care to play the part of a benevolent, friendly, and unselfish guardian, but rather that of a hard and unscrupulous master. They believed in the superiority of the Russian race over the Bulgarian, and were at no pains to conceal this view; indeed, they often paraded it. An Eastern Roumelian prefect once repeated to me the following speech which had been addressed to him by a Russian consul at an evening party: 'You are a prefect? Very well; but I hope that you are aware that you only hold that post thanks to Russia, and that

it is your duty to consider yourself a Russian prefect. You Bulgarians imagine sometimes that we are only here on a visit, but you must be made to understand that we are quite at home here.' 'And,' added the prefect, 'it was not as if the consul had told me this only once! But whenever he met me he repeated the same thing, so that finally I used to get into a state of nervous excitement when I only caught sight of him in the distance.' One must admit that this was not the way to gain the affections of the Bulgarians. Already during the lifetime of the Emperor Alexander II. there had been no lack of unpleasant conflicts in Bulgaria between the Russians holding appointments there and Prince Alexander, but the fatherly benevolence and confidence which the late Emperor always showed towards the Prince had made it very easy to settle those cases, and had prevented any feeling of bitterness from arising between the Prince and Russia. As soon, however, as the Emperor was dead and the Prince could no longer count on personal support at St. Petersburg, the Russian officers and officials treated even the Prince with haughty disdain, and it soon became evident that their only object was to render the Prince's stay in Bulgaria so disagreeable as to force him to resign the government. When he did not do that they went still further. Even Aksakoff[1] himself addressed the Prince, to his face, in these curt words: 'We have

[1] A leader of the Panslavist party in Moscow.

nothing against you personally, but we shall never stop agitating until we have accomplished your fall, *because you are a German!*' Is it surprising, considering the systematic hostility and persecution at the hands of the Russians, that Prince Alexander was not animated by any ardent love for his tormentors, but made the attempt to turn his subjects into 'Bulgarians.'

Hard times were brought about for the peoples—especially in the Principality—by the introduction of Dondukoff's constitution, which gave the National Assembly rights of decidedly too far-reaching a character for such a young nation. Young Bulgarians, who had mostly been educated abroad, embraced a parliamentary career with ambition, zeal, and passion. Factions were formed which were led by them, but mostly badly led, owing to their want of experience; and the result frequently was as complete a parliamentary jumble as could well be conceived. The greed of Absolutists, the machinations of demagogues: nothing was wanting, and it required all Prince Alexander's tact and political honesty to pilot the ship of State safely through those breakers. The worst was that the Russians joined in this internal strife, favouring first one party, then the other; upsetting first this Cabinet, then the other; and playing off the various parliamentary factions against the Prince. That under such circumstances everything did not come to utter grief, and that the young State did not completely collapse,

must be considered a perfect wonder. On inquiring into the cause, Prince Alexander and his statesmanlike attitude must be taken into account in the first instance, and further, an unlooked-for quality developed by the Bulgarians. Backward as the nation was at the time of the Russian war, the progress it made during the last six years has been gigantic, and it has showed a capacity for learning which is astonishing. The mistakes they committed themselves during the first years, served the Bulgarians afterwards as a lesson—and former unruly demagogues had grown into sober and determined statesmen. Hand in hand with the capacity went a strongly pronounced desire for culture, which led to the establishment of schools of every class all over the country, for instruction in the modern achievements of other nations. Great strides were made in the fields of administration and jurisprudence, and the management of the finances especially reached a high state of perfection. What State now-a-days ever realises a surplus in its accounts? It was left to the young State of Bulgaria to arrive at that ideal of every Chancellor of the Exchequer, having saved, that is simply laid aside, in the course of six years, a sum of 43½ million francs. As has already been stated, the relations with Turkey were very bad, not only because the vassal States wanted to free themselves from the irksome, though hardly appreciable, suzerainty of the Sultan; but above all because the

dream of a united Great Bulgaria was ever in their minds—a dream which had been brought so near realisation by the Peace of San Stefano. This desire for a Great Bulgarian State sprang naturally from the people, but it was also encouraged by the Russians with all their might, as they very rightly said to themselves that they would have all the more influence with the people if they were still able to hold out some promise to them, and to give them a tangible proof of how indispensable they were to them. That this unification could ever be achieved without Russian assistance was a thing very few of them contemplated. Clubs were formed, the object of which was to bring about the union of Eastern Roumelia with Bulgaria; Great Bulgarian newspapers were started, money collected everywhere, communications opened with Macedonia—for that country also was to be included in the Great Bulgarian State. These things took place openly and before all the world; everyone knew that a Great Bulgarian movement existed, but that movement had been in existence so long without having broken out, that no one any longer paid any attention to it.

Such was the condition of things in August 1885.

CHAPTER II.

JOURNEY TO THE SCENE OF THE REVOLUTION.

In Belgrad—'King of Servia and Macedonia'—To Philippopolis viâ Lompalanca and Sofia—Then and now—How did the Eastern Roumelian revolution commence?—The revolt at Philippopolis—The pillars of the old Government: Gavril Pasha Krestowitch and Drigalski Pasha.

On October 1, 1885, after an absence of seven years, I once more touched on Bulgarian soil, called thither by the events which had occurred at Philippopolis a fortnight before, and which had once again brought the Eastern question in its acutest form into prominent notice. I had intended travelling to Sofia viâ Belgrad and Nish, but in the Servian capital I came upon war preparations already in full swing, saw the Servian army in the process of mobilising, and found that it was almost impossible to reach Sofia by way of Nish. I saw King Milan leaving his capital amid the enthusiastic cheers of his subjects, whose 'hurrahs' for the 'King of Servia and Macedonia' were never-ending. At the railway station the King was offered a goblet of wine with the toast to the 'King of Servia and Macedonia,' and Milan cheerfully responded, being probably at

the time also of the opinion that they were about to fight the Turks once more and for the last time, as the Ottoman Empire, attacked on all sides, was bound to go to pieces and would become an easy prey to all its neighbours. How differently it all ended!

I only stayed two days at Belgrad and then embarked in a Danube steamer for Lompalanka, worried up to the last by the police, whose interference reaches a pitch in Servia quite unknown in other countries. From Lompalanka it was supposed Sofia could be reached easily. It was supposed! For none knew exactly what in the present times of war the means of communication were, and from my former travels I had only one recollection as to the means of communication in Bulgaria, and that was that they were non-existent. Thus I reached Lompalanka, and was at once very agreeably surprised on landing to find that I was not exposed to the slightest difficulty on the score of passport, which at the outset disposed me favourably for the Bulgarians, against whom I really had an old grudge on account of their massacres of the Turks during the Russian War. The surprise was all the more pleasant as I recalled to my mind all the miseries to which a traveller is condemned whose ill luck takes him into Servia. The first sounds I hear ashore are German: 'Do you wish to go to the Balkan Hotel or to the Hotel Bellevue?' With these questions several hotel porters with quite European-looking caps crowd round

me. 'There was nothing of this formerly,' was the first thought that entered my head; hotels, porters with regulation caps, German-speaking people—no, indeed, all that was formerly unknown in Bulgaria. Feeling sure that those hotels would be regular dens, I confided my luggage at haphazard to the porter of the Balkan Hotel, and followed him up a slight eminence on which the inn was situated. Halfway up I am met by the host, who inquires with great assiduity—in German—after my commands: Do I wish to stay here? do I wish to drive on to Sofia? 'Drive on to Sofia?' The man spoke about it as if this could be done with the greatest ease, very much to my relief, as I had already pictured to myself perfect mountains in the shape of difficulties. I stepped on to the small terrace in front of the inn, where a number of Bulgarians were sitting together drinking beer and engaged in eager conversation. This latest acquisition surpassed everything I had expected to find. Beer—real, excellent beer, straight from the cask and cooled on the ice, here in semi-Asia, would have been an utter impossibility seven years ago—in fact, no one would have been so rash as even to wish for such a thing. Now, however, I broached the question of conveyance, and to my great surprise I was at once offered several carriages, quite comfortable and decent-looking 'victorias' with four horses apiece, that would take me to Sofia in twenty-four hours, though certainly for very high pay. I chose one of

them, and can only say that I had every reason to be satisfied with it as well as with my journey. At the hotel I supplied myself with all necessary provisions for one day, and an hour later I was sitting in my carriage. Why do I dwell with such length on these trivial details? Because I want to make it clear to the reader how strongly I was at once impressed on my arrival in the country with the difference between the present and the past. To any one who had not known the Bulgaria of former times, all this would have appeared quite natural; for me it meant a revolution. And I was to see many another thing during my drive to Sofia which furnished the most unquestionable proof that the Bulgarians had not allowed the time after the Russian War to pass by unemployed, but that they had worked, and worked hard. Since Midhat Pasha, no one had thought about constructing new roads, and every one was satisfied with letting those that existed go to ruin. Now I found quite a newly constructed road which would even come up to all European requirements, although tremendous difficulties had to be surmounted, especially in crossing the Balkan range. For long stretches the road, which is carried along in zigzags, had been cut out of the solid rock, and I quite realised why, as I was informed later on, that work had cost several million francs. I must also mention other signs of civilisation; for instance, that I found in various village inns, where we made a short halt, amongst other good things,

bottles of champagne, which, however, bore the suspicious labels 'Léonis Réderer' and 'Moërt Chandron,' which look very much like 'Louis Roederer' and 'Moët et Chandon.' Luckily I did not taste the stuff, and I must also guard myself against the imputation of having held up these spurious wines as a triumph of civilisation; nevertheless I maintain that they constituted a *sign* of civilisation. So as not to remain altogether in the materio-spirituous regions, I will record one other achievement—the letter-boxes which I found in every large village. They are very small and simple, and bear the same proportion to the monumental pillar-boxes of Berlin as Bulgaria does to the German Empire, but still they indicate progress; for at the peril of bringing my Turkish friends into perpetual disrepute with our Postmaster-General, I must admit that at the time of the Turkish rule in Bulgaria, I never caught sight of even the smallest letter-box. The man who invented the saying that the degree of civilisation of a country should be measured by its consumption of soap, might have been an enterprising soap-boiler; if a postmaster were called upon to give an opinion on that point, he would probably give the prize to that country which could show the largest number of letter-boxes, and certainly one could adduce many an argument in favour of that view as well.

In this manner I reached Sofia, after having noticed on the way much that was of interest to me, though

nothing that indicated war. In general the populace exhibited an extraordinary amount of calmness, and followed its ordinary occupations with as much equanimity as if Bulgaria were in a state of profound peace. The public security, therefore, was perfect throughout the country, and one could ride, drive, or walk all over Bulgaria by day and night, without running the slightest risk, which can hardly be said of some of the European capitals.

I will not enter at this point into particulars about Sofia, the Bulgarian capital, for on that journey I only spent one night there, being anxious as quickly as possible to reach Philippopolis, where Prince Alexander was staying, and which place undoubtedly was the centre of interest. Consequently I left post haste for Philippopolis, being forced, however, to admit later on, when I had spent over four weeks in Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria, that this eagerness on my part, if it had not done me any harm, certainly had not done me any good.

When I left Europe I had thought that I should find myself here in the midst of war, with the Turks perhaps already at Philippopolis. Everything seemed to point to the likelihood, that the Sultan, yielding to the pressure of the Northern Powers, would put down by force of arms the revolt which had burst forth on September 18. Nothing of the kind, however, had been done, and Philippopolis, the revolutionary town,

lay quiet and peaceful before me. If the calm had not been disturbed every now and then by the marching of troops, there would have been nothing to remind one that a gigantic upheaval had taken place here a short time ago, and that a hostile army might any day march into the town. The greater part of the Bulgarian line-regiments had already arrived and gone on to the frontier, whilst now the curiously mixed crowds of reserve men and volunteers came trooping in from all parts of the country, many of them wearing a medal on their breasts, showing that they had taken part in the last Russo-Turkish War. The troops of the line looked exceedingly well, and as far as appearance went were not at all behind any German line-regiment. On the other hand, the Reserves were indifferently equipped, and only some were partly in uniform, whilst others had none at all. Moreover, the various detachments did not seem to hold together very well; there was a lack of officers; in short, the impression made by those troops was not very promising. Still, they had been collected with great rapidity, and they had certainly all responded to the call of their Prince willingly and with enthusiasm —a proof that the movement had a deeper hold of the people than one was at first inclined to believe in Europe. Their fantastic dress, their frequently martial-looking figures, contributed even more than the presence of the regular troops to render the scene in the streets highly picturesque, and I regretted that there

was no artist present who could have fixed it on his canvas.

In the midst of all these warlike preparations, the inhabitants of Philippopolis followed their avocations peacefully and undisturbedly; all the shops were open, and the Greek merchant was seen sitting side by side with the Bulgarian, on the look-out for customers, whilst a Turk in fez or turban was calmly squatting close by. This 'happy family' of Bulgarians and Turks, Christians and Mahomedans, was certainly the most unexpected sight which the town could offer at that moment to any strange visitor. The rising at Philippopolis was evidently directed against the Sultan's rule; it was a revolt of the Christian Bulgarians against the spiritual head of the Moslem faith; and after the experiences which had been made especially in Bulgaria, one was fully justified in assuming that the consequence would be, not only a war waged by the armed forces, but by the inhabitants against each other, accompanied by all the terrors that such a war of extermination between two nations carries with it. And I must confess that I experienced a feeling of relief when I found peace and harmony in the place of murder and bloodshed, and heard the Christian church-bells mingling peacefully with the Muezzin's call from the top of the graceful minarets. Whose was the good and wise influence that had brought this about? At that time I was in ignorance of it, but I felt that whoever had a warm heart for

humanity and toleration was bound to honour the man who had attained such a result.

What was the real origin of this Eastern Roumelian Revolution? When the news of the rising came upon the world like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, the first question asked by all those who are in the habit of looking more to the possible consequences than merely to the bare facts of political events, was, 'Whose work is this?' and this question almost forced the revolution itself into the background. Was it the doing of the Eastern Roumelians, of the Prince of Bulgaria, or of the Russians? Even to this day, when one might be better informed, the ideas entertained on that point are very confused; at the time it seemed only too natural that the hand of Russia should be immediately behind the revolutionary committee, and, moreover, that one should feel convinced Prince Alexander was acting in accordance with the 'White Czar,' for it seemed all but impossible that the Prince could have dared to take such a momentous step as to join in the Eastern Roumelian rising without the previous sanction of Russia. It is true that neither the European nations nor the European Cabinets knew either Bulgaria or Prince Alexander. The following is the true version: 'la vérité vraie.' Ever since 1878 the Bulgarians on both sides of the Balkans had been dissatisfied with the upsetting of the treaty of San Stefano by the Berlin Congress, and the Russians had been at great pains to

keep up and encourage this feeling of dissatisfaction. On both sides active committees had been formed whose ramifications embraced the whole country, and which reached even into Macedonia. All the world knew this; the Russians who took the movement under their protection, and also Aleko Pasha, the first Turkish Governor-General of Eastern Roumelia, who thought it compatible with his office to aspire to the dignity of a sovereign prince of both Bulgarias. To what extent the existence of this movement was universally known is proved by the, one may say, indisputable fact, that at the beginning of the Eighties, no one would have been surprised by the news of a revolt. Since then some change had taken place in the conditions; Prince Alexander, the original Russian candidate for the Great Bulgarian throne, had fallen into disgrace at the Court of St. Petersburg, and consequently, if the unification had been brought about, it would have been puzzling to know whom to place on the throne. Later on, owing to her joining the Austro-German Alliance, Russia renounced her plans of a Great Bulgaria, at least for a time, retired from the movement, and left it to its own devices, firmly convinced that Russian influence in Eastern Roumelia was so powerful that no Bulgarian would ever dare make a move without Russia's consent. This proved to be a mistaken idea, and the fault lay with the Russian agents who must have kept their Government very indifferently informed. These same

agents are also to be blamed for never having noticed anything of the immediate preparations of the revolutionary committee, a reproach that applies equally to the diplomatic agents of the other countries. This movement, however, deserted and neglected by Russia, went on and fell into Bulgarian or rather Roumelian hands. The Committee saw that at that time nothing was to be attained with the aid of Russia, so they set about doing without it. As they were not quite sure of the support of the Bulgarians either, they kept the plan secret from them also, never doubting for a moment that Bulgaria would bow to the accomplished fact and acquiesce in whatever had taken place. With incontestable ability and the utmost secrecy, the revolutionary committee, Stranski, Ryseff, Nikolajeff, Stojanoff, Kaltscheff, and Panitza, completed their preparations, and on September 18 they struck the first blow. They have been reproached with having ruthlessly and without sufficient cause kindled the conflagration on the Balkan peninsula, and with having never represented a real popular party, but of only being a band of greedy office-seekers.

With regard to the first point, there is no doubt of its being open to argument; as regards the second, it is perfectly true that the members of the revolutionary committee did not in point of fact possess any legal, well-substantiated authority; but it is still more true that they took upon themselves to represent a cause

which was highly popular throughout the country, and which was in accordance with the aspirations of the entire Bulgarian nation. Otherwise the whole people would never have joined and followed them as they did, would never have so readily made the sacrifices demanded of them later on, and would never have fought as they did finally fight. The revolutionary committee was indeed impersonal, one may even say obscure, but it was the representative of a national idea which in turn upheld it. Whoever would deny a national idea the right of existence because its leaders are men either unknown or little known, very sadly underrates both the powers of an idea and the powers of a nation.

At any rate those men could not well have been quite insignificant, otherwise their *coup de main* would hardly have succeeded so well. Certainly they found in the Roumelian authorities opponents as feeble as could well be conceived. Gavril Pasha Krestowitch, the Turkish Governor-General, was serenely sitting at breakfast, when Major Nikolajeff, accompanied by several officers, entered his room and made him the startling announcement that he was deposed and a prisoner. Gavril rushed to the window, probably with the intention of calling for assistance, but seeing Nikolajeff's battalion of militia drawn up in the courtyard of the 'Konak,' he quickly took in the situation and bowed to the inevitable with dignity. In the meanwhile the union of Eastern Roumelia with Bulgaria

was proclaimed in the town amidst the frantic enthusiasm of the populace, whilst the gendarmerie and militia stood to their arms—a useless precaution—so as to be ready to suppress any opposition to the revolutionary movement by force. Gavril Pasha, accompanied by a schoolmistress armed with a sword, was driven all round Philippopolis in a carriage, to the delight of his faithful subjects, the only instance of want of tact displayed by the Bulgarians that day. Without doubt the revolt had succeeded brilliantly. By this time the commander-in-chief of the Roumelian army, Drigalsky Pasha, had heard the noise in the streets; without much hesitation he buckled on his trusty blade and went to the market-square to see what was up. There he found drawn up a battalion of militia, with Major Nikolajeff at its head, and the following dialogue ensued:

D. 'Sir, what are you doing here with that battalion?'

N. 'I do not know you.'

D. 'What! you do not know me?'

N. 'Policeman, take that gentleman home.'

And two policemen took Drigalsky between them and removed him in the most approved style. This is probably the most remarkable thing that ever happened to the commander-in-chief of an army. To make a prisoner of the aged Gavril Pasha, they at least turned out a battalion, and later on he was even driven through the town in a carriage, not that this could be considered to be an

exaggerated mark of respect, but at any rate it showed that the old man had not been forgotten, whilst it was not even found worth while to arrest Drigalsky Pasha, the commander-in-chief of the army. Only later on a sentry was placed at his door, and he was told to consider himself under arrest. In this way the leaders of the Eastern Roumelian Revolution showed that they were not only capable of organising a conspiracy, but that they knew how to bear public testimony to incapacity in others.

And in the same way that the revolt succeeded in Philippopolis without bloodshed, so in the whole province; the military and the populace everywhere acknowledged the provisional government; in one forenoon the Turkish rule had been overthrown and the whole undertaking accomplished.

CHAPTER III.

PRINCE ALEXANDER OF BULGARIA AND HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE REVOLT.

Prince Alexander accepts the government of Eastern Roumelia and places himself at the head of the movement—The Prince's alleged complicity in the revolt—Why he acceded to the request of the Roumeliots—His journey to Philippopolis—Prince Alexander as a diplomatist—Prince Alexander and the Turks.

THE first action of the provisional government was to telegraph to Prince Alexander of Bulgaria to inform him of what had occurred, and to request him to assume the government of the united Bulgarias, taking it for granted that in the probable event of a war with Turkey, he would lend his new Roumelian subjects both his personal aid and that of his people. Very soon the Roumeliots received the reply: the Prince accepted the proffered crown, and a manifesto of the 'Prince of North and South Bulgaria' decreed the mobilisation of all the armed forces of both countries. Prince Alexander himself with the first Bulgarian troops shortly afterwards crossed the frontier into Eastern Roumelia. The die was cast! All this had taken place before startled Europe had recovered from her first alarm. All eyes

were turned towards Turkey, and the news of the entry of Turkish troops and of the first encounter was daily expected. Turkey, however, remained inactive out of sheer terror and surprise; not that the suppression of the Bulgaro-Roumelian rising appeared to her to be so hazardous an undertaking in itself, but because she had the firm conviction that Russia was behind the Bulgarians. That it was precisely Russia who was the first of the Powers to give her the advice to march immediately into Eastern Roumelia, made Turkey all the more suspicious, as she was afraid of Russia laying a trap for her. The reminiscence of the Kossaks who stood under the walls of Constantinople in 1878 was still too vivid, and under that impression the Sublime Porte decided upon acting with the utmost caution, and as a preliminary measure only to address a circular to the Powers,—in short, to do nothing. And now the world witnessed the curious spectacle that it was not Turkey whose rights had been violated, but the very Power who had created Bulgaria only seven years ago, and who had always been looked upon as that country's protector; that it was Russia who turned with unparalleled fury against that very union which she had formerly encouraged with all her might. What was the cause of this remarkable change? I think there was not one, there were three reasons, which caused the wrath of Ignatieff's country to flare up so violently against

Bulgaria's breach of the treaty. In the first place, there is no doubt that under existing circumstances the event occurred at a very inopportune time as far as Russia was concerned; it interfered with the plans of her greater policy, and moreover could easily expose her in the eyes of the allied Powers to the suspicion of having played a double game. Secondly, Russian pride was deeply hurt at the Bulgarians having dared to strike such a blow without Russia's consent, thereby attempting to free themselves from the Russian tutelage. Last, but not least, the Russians were aghast at the thought that the very man whom they so disliked and whom they had tried to turn out of Bulgaria by every means in their power, should now become Prince of Great Bulgaria, not only irrespective of Russia's will and pleasure, but actually in defiance of it. They considered themselves bound to aim a decisive blow against this outrageous behaviour, and it was decided to recall all the Russian officers who were serving in the Bulgarian army, in the hope that the army, denuded of its leaders, would be incapable of offering any resistance. By that deed Russia embarked upon a line of action which was destined to lead her very far astray. The excuse given was the violation of the Berlin Treaty, which of course could not be denied, and further, the alleged fact that Prince Alexander had thrown dust in the eyes of Russia and had abused the Czar's confidence. It was maintained that he had given his promise to

Russia not to undertake anything towards bringing about the union, and that, too, at the very time when the revolt at Philippopolis had been already determined upon and prepared by him. If these allegations had been true, Russia certainly would have had every cause to be angry with the Prince, and I am ready to admit that at the first moment appearances were against him. That it was only the appearances was proved later on in various ways, and everyone who is at all acquainted with Bulgarian affairs is convinced that these accusations were unjust. None can know better how all came about than Prince Alexander, and no less a person than he himself gave me the following exposition at Philippopolis: 'I had,' said the Prince, 'for some time back to contend with the animosity of the Russian agents at Sofia, who tried to undermine my position by every possible means. I further gained the impression that M. de Giers, perhaps influenced by the reports of these agents, was anything but favourably inclined towards me. The position became in time quite unbearable, and on my return from England, where I had gone in the summer, I determined to clear the matter up and to have an explanation about the whole business with M. de Giers, who happened to be at Franzensbad at the time. Accordingly I went to Franzensbad, where I had an exhaustive discussion with M. de Giers on every topic referring to Bulgaria. At the conclusion of our meeting I gained the impression, that perhaps it might

be possible in future to arrive at better relations with Russia, and I parted from M. de Giers, fairly satisfied.

'Now, amongst other things he had told me that the policy of Russia and of the Northern Powers at that moment was based on maintaining the existing state of things in the East, and that therefore every movement tending to further the unification of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia would be opposed in the most energetic manner. I was able to assure M. de Giers, honestly and conscientiously, that although I was naturally aware how universally this unification was desired by the people, yet I did not believe that the movement was at all likely to break out within a measurable space of time. From Franzensbad I returned to Bulgaria, taking up my residence for the time at Varna. There, to my inexpressible surprise, I received notice of the plan, only three days before the revolt broke out, and I lost no time in despatching a confidential envoy to Philippopolis to dissuade the people most urgently from their intentions. I sent word to the conspirators, that at this moment, immediately after my interview with Giers, there could, less than at any other time, be a question of bringing about the union—in short, I used every argument to dissuade them from the rash step. However, it came about differently, for before my messenger had reached Philippopolis, I received a telegram which informed me of the

revolt, and of the arrest of Gavril, and calling upon me to assume the government and to place myself at the head of the movement. What was I to do? For two hours I thought it over, then my resolve was taken. He who is called upon to exercise political functions of a higher kind, no less than the general in the field, is often forced to make up his mind rapidly. I said to myself that if I refused, there would be nothing left for me but to renounce my crown and to leave the country immediately, for it was inconceivable that I could remain Prince of Bulgaria after a refusal; I should therefore have fallen, and not precisely with much glory. On the other hand I could not disguise from myself that I should also run a serious risk of losing my crown in case I accepted, and that in fact the prospects on both sides were decidedly unfavourable. However, it was of paramount importance that I should come to some decision immediately, and in accepting, I was in great part influenced by the following considerations. I knew my country, and knew that there was the greatest possible danger of the movement degenerating in the most awful manner. Notwithstanding all my exertions, the hatred of nationalities is not yet stifled, and I foresaw that, in addition to the revolt, there would be a civil war between Bulgarians and Mahomedans. I alone was in a position to keep the movement within peaceful bounds and to prevent it from leading to excesses.

Without me anarchy would be rampant; with me peace and order were assured. That is why I accepted.'

. . . . . .

This simple, yet exhaustive exposition proves better than anything how groundless the accusations were that had been brought against the Prince of being 'deceitful and unreliable.' If Prince Alexander possesses a fault, it is that of being too ingenuous and frank. Equally wrong appears the statement that at least M. Karaweloff, the Prime Minister, knew all about the conspiracy, perhaps was its guiding spirit. As soon as Prince Alexander had decided upon joining in the movement, he instantly telegraphed to Karaweloff at Sofia, to know whether he would go with him; upon which the answer came back that Karaweloff was away and that his exact whereabouts at that moment was not known. It was only through telegrams sent to all the prefects throughout Bulgaria that it was discovered that he was staying with some friends at Rustchuck, and it was from there that he declared his intention of following the Prince in the step he had taken. It seems to follow from the foregoing, on judging it impartially, that this great malefactor, as well, was quite innocent in the matter of the revolt at Philippopolis, and that he, no less than the Prince, had to act in an 'impasse' which was not of his own making. Whilst the Chamber was convoked to give its sanction to what had occurred and to vote the necessary funds, which was done without a

hitch, Prince Alexander left for Philippopolis in great haste, accompanied only by a few aides-de-camp. It was a journey of doubtful issue, and nobody could say with any degree of certainty whether the Prince would reach Philippopolis in safety. Though it was known the revolt had succeeded, yet none dared hope that the Krestowitch party would be so feeble and effete that no one throughout the land would rise on its behalf, and the Prince and his companions had to be prepared to be received either with triumphal arches or with rifle bullets, since it seemed only too likely that the Turks in Eastern Roumelia would at once rise up against the new government. Luckily none of this occurred, and the Prince's journey from the Shipka up to Philippopolis was like a triumphal progress, whilst the reception in the town itself was a popular demonstration of the most enthusiastic kind. All Bulgarians were ready to make the greatest sacrifices for the union, and no one repented of what had been done, although all were convinced that the sanguinary struggle with the Turks was bound to begin at once. In the eyes of the revolutionary committee and of the whole Bulgarian people, the great object, the unification, could only be reached by one means—war with Turkey. Here it was that Prince Alexander found the first opportunity to display his diplomatic talent, which had been latent up to now, and one may well say that it was a stroke of genius which would not have occurred to many another,

when he declared, in the midst of the Revolution, that it was not directed against Turkey, and that he continued now, as before, to be the faithful vassal of the Sultan, which condition was in no wise altered by extending the frontiers of his country. This declaration, I admit, was a forced one, but it did not fail to make its proper impression both in Turkey and in Europe, and the course of events later on showed that the Prince knew very well what he said and what he wanted. However, it was necessary to prove, not only in words but in deeds, that the rising was not prompted by any hostile, or at any rate, any aggressive spirit, and consequently the Prince gave orders to have the Turkish emblems replaced which had been torn down by the populace in their first revolutionary ardour, and soon the Turkish ensign was seen fluttering peacefully on the roof of the 'Konak,' side by side with the Bulgarian lion, or one might say the 'Hessian lion,' which has been transferred from the Prince's family arms into those of Bulgaria. Simultaneously the Prince telegraphed to the Sultan, informed him of what had been done, and begged his suzerain, with the assurances of perfect devotion, to sanction the union, which after all was an accomplished fact.

But Prince Alexander went further still, and on the day of his arrival, immediately after having attended a *Te Deum* in the orthodox Church, he also visited the principal mosque, and had the prayer for the Sultan

offered up in his presence. The impression made by this on the Mahomedans of Philippopolis was immense, and I cannot describe it better than by repeating what an old Turk of the place told me later on. 'I have grown old,' he said, 'and have gone through much in the last few years, since our separation, mostly of a painful nature. I was therefore prepared for anything rather than this. The Padisha has sent us two Governor-Generals, one of whom, Aleko Pasha, not only exchanged the fez for the kalpak[1] at the frontier, but even his Turkish name Aleko for the Bulgarian and Christian title of a Prince Vogorides. The same miracle was enacted with his successor, who was appointed Governor-General at Constantinople as Gavril Pasha, and who entered upon his office at Philippopolis as M. Krestowitch. Both of them gave us little or no protection against persecutions; maybe they were unable to do so, or that they did not find it worth their while. Neither of them ever set foot inside a mosque, and yet they were sent by the Sultan; and now, this foreign rebel arrives, turns out the Sultan's representatives sword in hand, and the first thing he does is to go to the mosque. They say that in the Principality he loves his Mahomedan subjects as much as the Christians. If he brings us justice and toleration, he shall indeed be blessed.'

Prince Alexander had felt, only too rightly, that

[1] Bulgarian national head-dress.

without him the movement would have led, not only to external but to internal war. When he arrived at Philippopolis there was every indication that the various nationalities would fall foul of each other, for though the provisional government had managed very cleverly to prepare and carry through the revolt, still, at the moment of success, it lacked that liberal spirit of toleration for those whose feelings and faith were at variance with their own, which was the only means of preserving peace and order. Here it became necessary for a strong hand and a far-reaching eye to interfere, and Prince Alexander did not hesitate to proceed with the utmost rigour against his own followers, the Bulgarians, whilst he treated the Turks with the greatest forbearance and clemency. And so it came about that to-day we can speak of the 'bloodless revolt' in Roumelia.

I cannot help telling a story at this point which does honour to both parties—the Prince and the Mahomedans—and which proves that one can do sometimes more by straightforward and true confidence, than by the most artful tricks. During the first days no one in the province could tell what attitude the Prince had assumed towards the Mahomedans at Philippopolis, and consequently telegrams were received from every prefect in the country, which were all pretty much of the same substance and to this effect: 'All our men capable of bearing arms having now left their villages, there is a universal fear lest the Maho-

medans, who are alone left behind, should fall upon the Christians. Amongst the former, threatening symptoms are already noticed, and we cannot be answerable for anything unless we receive authority, for which we now pray, to disarm the Mahomedans.' To this unanimous demand the Prince telegraphed back that he most distinctly refused the desired permission. Then he sent for the Mufti (head priest with the Mahomedans) of Philippopolis to the Konak, and showed him all the telegrams of the prefects in the original. The Mufti read and grew pale. 'You see,' said the Prince, 'what I am asked to do. I have always been very well satisfied with my Mahomedan subjects, I have every confidence in you, and therefore I have not acceded to this request. Will you betray my trust in you?' The Mufti replied: 'My Prince, we know how you have acted towards our co-religionists in Bulgaria, and we see how ready you are to conciliate us; as long as you are in Eastern Roumelia no Mahomedan will take up arms against you.'

And not one ever did.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BULGARO-ROUMELIAN MILITARY FORCES.

The strength of the army, and its training—Russian and Bulgarian officers—An army without leaders—The re-organisation and the taking up of a strategic position on the Turkish frontier.

THE first question which was probably uppermost in men's minds, at the outbreak of the Eastern Roumelian revolt, was, what armed force Bulgaria could produce, what its composition and worth would be, and what chances it would have of coming off best in a collision with the Turks. Bulgaria, that is the Principality, had at her disposal in time of peace the following: 8 regiments of infantry, of 3 battalions, each 700 strong; 9 squadrons of cavalry, 12 batteries of 4 guns each, and a battalion of pioneers; which represents a total of 20,000 men. The system of mobilisation was the German one, by which the Reserves are added to their respective corps of peace formation, so that the army would have taken the field, according to the original plan, with a strength of 8 regiments of infantry, of 3 battalions, each *1000* strong; 9 squadrons of cavalry; 12 batteries of *8* guns each; a company of garrison artillery, and a

battalion of pioneers; making up a total of 30,000 men. This force would therefore about correspond in numbers to a German army corps on war footing, to which, however, a large number of Reserve battalions could be added by calling out all available men.

This plan, however, was not carried out exactly as had been intended, and the situation, which was contrary to all anticipations, forced the Bulgarians into making several alterations, which were only carried out by strenuous exertions, and after which the Bulgarian army on war footing was composed as follows: 8 regiments of infantry of 4 (instead of 3) battalions, each at least 1000 strong; 9 squadrons of cavalry; 12 batteries of 8 guns each, and a battalion of engineers. Hence that army was 35,000 men strong, in addition to a secondary force of certainly more than 20 battalions of Reserves and Volunteers, so that the Principality was able to bring up 55,000 men, rather more than less. The Eastern Roumelian militia, on war footing, was to consist of 12 battalions of the 1st levy and 12 battalions of the 2nd levy, besides 2 squadrons of cavalry and 4 guns. On a peace footing the battalions of the first levy were only to be kept under arms one at a time, consisting of 12 companies. As a matter of fact, there were 20 such companies in existence, which of course was a great advantage in bringing the force to its fighting strength. The mobilised Roumelian battalions were of very unequal strength, so that

an exact estimate presents great difficulties. However, I do not think I am far wrong in assuming that there must have been about 35,000 Roumeliots under arms, rather less than more, which, joined to the Bulgarian army, gives a force of over 90,000 men. To this should be added the 3 Macedonian Volunteer battalions and the Mahomedans, who joined voluntarily on the Servian War breaking out. In point of numbers, therefore, one may take it as pretty certain that about 100,000 men were with the colours, if anything a few thousand less than more. Now, in the first instance, as regards the 'personnel,' one must pronounce the Bulgarian to be a very serviceable soldier; he is easily amenable to discipline, will follow his leader wherever he goes, is very hardened against the influence of the weather, is quite splendid at marching, and is exceedingly unpretentious with regard to his food.

When the first Bulgarian troops were formed, in 1878, it was naturally the Russians who undertook their formation and command; and the entire body of officers in Bulgaria consisted of Russians, who were lent to the new State in accordance with an agreement arrived at with Russia. Only some few Bulgarians, who had formerly served in the Russian army, were taken over as Bulgarian officers proper. In Eastern Roumelia it was the same thing, excepting that there several foreign officers—Germans, Frenchmen, and Italians—were brought in. The system of training

was widely different in the two countries; for whilst Bulgaria possessed an actual standing army, with a period of two years' service with the colours and eight in the Reserve, it had purposely been determined to give the Roumelian troops the character of a militia—that is, only two months' service with the colours and recurring drill-periods. The entire Russian army rules and regulations had been simply taken over, and the words of command were given, as well as the service generally carried out, in Russian. Broadly speaking, one can say that the Bulgarian military forces were organised in such a manner that they could be looked upon as forming an integral portion of the Russian army, ready at any moment to act as an advanced guard of the Russian main body. At the time of their creation there was no idea of their ever being employed independently, and consequently there was a total absence of such departments as transport and commissariat; the medical staff also was very inadequate. All these wants, according to the original plan, were to be supplied by the Russian main body, coming up in rear.

However much many of the Russian officers in the Bulgarian army may have shown themselves in an unfavourable light, especially with regard to their private life, still one must admit, openly and unreservedly, that they produced a masterpiece by the training of the Bulgarian troops, and that in the surprisingly short space of six years they created a well-disciplined and

efficient army where formerly there was nothing. During the first years the training was exclusively in their hands, and only gradually an after-growth of young Bulgarian officers was admitted, they having received their training in part—in the course of a two years' service—in the Russian army. The institution of the Military Academy at Sofia—a cross between the German 'Kadetten-corps' and 'Kriegsschule'—provided a portion of this supply, but it really only made itself felt during the last few years; whilst the remainder of the young officers were recruited from amongst the more educated classes of the population. It is worthy of notice that no distinction whatever was made between Eastern Roumelians and Bulgarians, and that, as a matter of fact, the members of both armies were quite free to exchange, and in the same way young Bulgarians from the Turkish province of Macedonia entered the Bulgarian army. There were a few Mahomedan officers in the Roumelian army, but none at all in the Bulgarian. On the other hand, the Mahomedan population in Bulgaria had to furnish its contingent of the yearly conscription of the regular army. The young Bulgarian officers showed remarkable aptitude and diligence, and enjoyed, as will always be the case in newly-created armies, a very rapid promotion. Already, in the year 1883, all the places of subalterns, with hardly an exception, were filled by them, and as there was now no lack of after-growth, the Bulgarians, and

especially Prince Alexander, put forward the claim to have their young officers promoted to captaincies, which, however, was at first energetically opposed by the Russian Minister of War. At this early stage an open rupture between the Prince and Russia nearly occurred; but ultimately the Russians yielded, and the vacancies amongst the captains were filled with Bulgarian lieutenants, so that at the outbreak of the Roumelian revolt nearly half the captaincies were held by Bulgarians, while the other half, as well as the whole of the appointments of superior officers, were in the hands of Russians. If the Bulgarians were so anxious to convert their body of officers into a purely national one, the reason was to be found partly in a very natural desire to possess a really Bulgarian body of officers, and partly because the Russians had not understood how to make themselves popular with the Bulgarians, their imperious manner having more than once led to unpleasant quarrels between the Bulgarian and Russian officers serving in the same army. Moreover, the thrifty Bulgarians found out that the Russian officers were expensive articles, for although their actual salaries were paid by Russia, Bulgaria was forced to make them additional allowances, which not only very considerably exceeded the amount of their salaries, but which were very much larger than the pay of the native officers. As in Bulgaria, so in Eastern Roumelia, a strong aversion against the Russian officers made itself felt, and the

Bulgarians had succeeded in the course of time in ousting most of them and in filling their places with natives.

When Prince Alexander decreed the mobilisation of the Bulgarian army, neither he nor anyone else doubted for a moment that the Russian officers would consider themselves bound to lead the troops to which they belonged in time of peace, against the enemy in time of war. This was looked upon as such a matter of course that it never occurred to anybody to think it might possibly come about differently. It was therefore like a thunderbolt that the news burst upon Bulgaria of the Czar having ordered the Russian officers to leave the Bulgarian army and to return to Russia at once. One can realise the situation which was then created very well by picturing to one's self, in Germany—or any other country for that matter—at the moment of mobilising, every officer down to and including the captains leaving the army, and nothing but lieutenants remaining behind. Actually the case was still worse in Bulgaria, for whilst with us (in Germany) the subalterns can, alas! count up to fifteen years' service, the most senior of the native Bulgarian officers had only received their commission eight years previously. If the Russians, as was undoubtedly the case, had intended dealing the Bulgarian army a fatal blow by this measure, they had certainly chosen a means which appeared to have every chance of success. What remained to the Bulgarian

army after the departure of the Russians? Young officers without any experience of war whatever, and but little of ordinary life, not one of whom had ever held a higher command than that of a company; officers who had never had an opportunity of studying the duties of the staff, or in the War Office, and of whom it appeared very doubtful whether they would possess sufficient authority to maintain the necessary discipline amongst their subordinates. It would have been comprehensible if under such circumstances Prince Alexander had thrown up the sponge, and if he had not dared to take upon himself the awful responsibility of placing an army denuded of its leaders face to face with the enemy. One may be quite sure that Prince Alexander fully felt this responsibility, and that he asked himself whether he could continue this dangerous venture any longer with any chance of success. The accurate knowledge he possessed of his officers, the confidence he had in them and in himself, made him answer this question in the affirmative.

And so, in the midst of mobilising, the labour of completely re-organising the various regimental staffs and the military administration was begun, during which the Prince proved that he possessed a quality which really ought to be compulsory with all monarchs, a just appreciation of individuals, and a capacity to put them in the right place. In the twinkling of an eye, in

the midst of moving the troops, everything was accomplished, and the new commanders not only appointed to their new posts but settled down in them. Captain Nikiforoff, of the artillery, directed the War Office with greater firmness, and doubtlessly with more regularity, than would have been the case with Prince Kantakuzene, Russian general and whilom Minister of War, while Captain Petroff had shaken down in his new position with his officers of the headquarter-staff as if he had never been anything else but Adjutant-General of the Bulgarian army. Captains of companies assumed the command of regiments and brigades brought up to their war complements, and led them from Bulgaria into Roumelia in the most exemplary manner, without committing any serious blunders and without any signs of insubordination on the part of the troops towards their young leaders. The Russian calculation that the Bulgarian army would collapse without its Russian leaders was thereby proved to have been erroneous, and there only remained the question whether the young Bulgarian officers would know how to lead their troops in action as well, after the mobilisation and the taking up of a strategic position had been carried out.

The Turks seemed at that time to be the only likely enemy, and accordingly a position on the Turkish frontier was taken up in the following manner. The main force was posted between Tirnowa-Semenli and Jamboli,

fronting towards Adrianople, about 4,000 men remained at Philippopolis, and a strong brigade took up a position in the vicinity of Kustendil. The result of this was that Bulgaria was entirely denuded of troops, and not only all her regulars, but the whole of her reserves and other levies were actually in Eastern Roumelia on the Turkish frontier. This moving up into position had been executed with more rapidity than the Turkish mobilisation, and even in the second week of October the Bulgarian force was decidedly superior in numbers to the Turkish, especially along the Philippopolis-Adrianople railway. Consequently there was no lack of hot-heads who counselled the Prince to invade Turkish territory near Mustapha Pasha. The Greeks and Servians, possibly also the Montenegrins, would then be drawn into the movement, which they asserted had all the more chance of succeeding as Turkey was not by any means ready with her armaments. Although there certainly was something in these arguments, still the Prince declined in a very decided manner, made his troops order arms, and contented himself with inspecting the various detachments at the frontier, and with assuring himself that everything was in readiness for repelling a Turkish attack. To meet such an attack with all his might was his firm resolve; so long as it was not made, the troops on the frontier, in accordance with the most stringent orders,

were to avoid all provocation and were not even to reply to any on the part of the Turks.

Thus the expectations of those who had predicted slaughter and battles on Roumelian soil for the beginning of October came to nought, and for the present diplomacy remained in possession of the field.

CHAPTER V.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE POWERS.

Russian intrigues in Bulgaria—Animosity of the Conference—England's opposition and her reasons—Impossibility to come to complete agreement—The peace of Europe endangered by a Turkish invasion—The brigand-brigade.

EUROPE requires peace, and is consequently peaceably inclined. Its diplomacy, or at least that of the Powers who have the lead at the time, has for years past made that the aim of all its exertions, and it could hardly fail that the outbreak of the Eastern Roumelian revolt filled it with anger against the originators, and more particularly against him who was wrongly considered to be the prime instigator, namely Prince Alexander. This animosity of the Powers would, however, hardly have assumed that embittered and implacable character if Russia, before all others, had not felt so deeply offended by the revolt which had taken place without her aid. I have already hinted shortly what the principal charges are that were brought against Prince Alexander in Russia: his German origin, his disinclination to allow himself to be treated like a subordinate by Russian consuls and generals, his endeavours to raise a

national feeling amongst the Bulgarians, and to make something more of Bulgaria than a mere Russian province. Attempts had been made in various ways to remove him from Bulgaria, and it was hoped at first to make his life such a burden to him, through incessantly setting the different factions by the ears, that he would leave of his own accord. When this proved of no avail, a measure was resorted to which was about the most forcible that could have been chosen.

At the time when the two Russian generals, Soboleff and Kaulbars, were ruling at Sofia as 'Duumvirs,' the following incident occurred. One night the generals entered the palace and requested to be taken to the Prince. The officer of the guard, Lieutenant Marinoff (who afterwards fell at Slivnitza), did not like the look of it, and refused to comply with the demand, notwithstanding the explicit orders of his immediate chief, the Minister for War. On their attempting to force their way in, he offered strenuous resistance and made a report of it to the Prince.

The surroundings of the palace were hurriedly examined, and what was found? Several carriages ready horsed, and a printed proclamation which put forth how the good people of Bulgaria, tired of the Prince's misrule, had revolted, made a prisoner of the Prince, and transported him across the frontier. This accounted for the carriages; the proclamation further contained the announcement that a provisional government had been

established under the presidency of Messrs. Soboleff and Kaulbars. Now things turned out rather differently. Prince Alexander remained at Sofia, but Messrs. Soboleff and Kaulbars were politely requested to leave the country, and rather organise revolutions somewhere else. But had it not been for brave Marinoff, who staked his head out of love and devotion for his Prince, we in Europe should one fine day have read a telegram saying 'that the good people of Bulgaria, tired of the Prince's misrule,' &c. &c.

Evidently the thing could not be done in this way either. Still the Russians followed up their plan of removing the Prince with rare pertinacity, only that now they began preparing the ground for an ultimate deposition by trying to place the Prince as much as ever possible in an unfavourable and contemptible light in the eyes of the European courts. The soul of this wretched policy was the Russian Consul-General, M. Kojander, and for the sake of Russia's honour I will assume that he was acting on his own account, and that he intentionally deceived both his Government and his Emperor. What concerns us here are two despatches, in the first of which Kojander accused the Prince of leading a scandalously immoral life, which is absolutely untrue, local reasons rendering it an impossibility; the contents of the second I cannot enter into, but merely give the assurance that it contained an incredible piece of infamy, which was made worse by allowing it to

come into the hands of people who otherwise are altogether outside the reach of official correspondence. It may be stated at once that both documents completely failed in their object, but it should be pointed out all the same how utterly impossible it was for Prince Alexander under such circumstances to look upon the Russian Consul-General as his best friend and trustiest counsellor, for that is what was demanded from St. Petersburg.

Now occurred the revolt, and it was probably again Kojander who did everything in his power to make the Prince appear, in the eyes of Europe, in as unfavourable a light as possible. Once more he did not hesitate to propagate every kind of falsehood, and tried, up to the last moment, to alienate Karaweloff from the Prince by telling him of a new—needless to say, invented—piece of infamy on the part of the latter. At the same time he distinctly promised him that Russia would offer the Bulgarians the immediate accomplishment of a most complete and unrestricted union, if Karaweloff would overthrow the Prince, for which purpose the whole influence and the best assistance of the Russian Consul-General were to be placed at his disposal. And this took place at the very moment when the official Russian diplomacy was moving heaven and earth to prevent any violation of the Berlin Treaty, even at the risk of seeing her once so beloved Bulgarians overpowered by Turkish arms. Kojander's

offer was rejected by Karaweloff in so decided a fashion that the latter, who was formerly in such high favour with the Russians, from that time forth fell into the same disgrace as Prince Alexander himself, so much so that at a later stage of the complications his dismissal was demanded by Russia before everything else. With regard to the inventing of untrue stories, M. Kojander was ably seconded by Prince Kantakuzene, as proved by the following incident. Some time after the Russian officers had been recalled, the Russian naval officers in the Bulgarian service also received orders to return to Russia. M. Tsanoff, the Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, tried to have that order rescinded by making representations to Kojander, upon which the latter replied that the recall of the naval officers was the Czar's answer to the insult which Prince Alexander had recently put upon the Russian army. Questioned as to what constituted this insult, Kojander produced the following tale, namely that General Kantakuzene had informed him how, in addressing a Bulgarian regiment, Prince Alexander had said: 'This day (on which the Russian officers had left Bulgaria) is the happiest of my life. For all that I care, they can all go, if only Wassili remains with us.' Now since Wassili was no other than the most popular Russian 'cabby' in all Sofia, no doubt such a remark on the part of the Prince would have shown more wit and satire than political caution and tact, but unfortunately there was

the usual drawback of all M. Kojander's stories, inasmuch as it was a complete invention. Prince Alexander at once gave that assurance through Tsanoff, which, however, did not prevent the Russians, some time later on, from spreading the story far and wide, although they were fully aware that there was not a word of truth in it. Or did Kojander conceal that from his Government?

At the same time everything was done to stir up the populace against Prince Alexander, and the attempt was made to represent him as being a 'Jonah' whose removal was urgently necessary in the interests of Bulgaria. Thus a rumour was spread amongst a regiment marching off from Widdin, that the Turks were already at Sofia; had massacred the whole population of Eastern Roumelia, and were about to cross the Balkans to do the same by the Bulgarians. The White Czar at St. Petersburg, however, would not render any help so long as Prince Alexander of Bulgaria had not been deposed and banished by his people. In short, *with* the Prince bloody annihilation at the hand of the Turks; *without* the Prince peaceful accomplishment of the union and fulfilment of all Bulgarian desires, and a few others besides. The choice would not have been a hard one if the Bulgarians had put any faith in the Russian allurements.

At Constantinople a Conference of the ambassadors had met, which, one may well say, was under the gui-

dance of the Northern Powers. Now, in the councils of the Northern Powers it had been decided that the most interested party, Russia, was in a certain degree to be given the lead, and that her wishes were not to be opposed. What these were could not be doubtful, judging by the recall of the Russian officers and the attitude of the Russian representatives. Prince Alexander was to be removed by any and every means. As, however, it would hardly have done to punish the presumable originator of the union with deposition whilst acknowledging the union itself, it was resolved as a preliminary to make the retrocession of the union part of the programme. This would have answered the purpose of Russia any way, for from the moment that the movement at the head of which he had placed himself miscarried, Prince Alexander's position in Bulgaria would have become untenable, and room would have been made for Prince Waldemar of Denmark, the brother of the Russian Empress. The two other Northern Powers were all the more ready to agree to this extension of the programme, as the carrying out of the same would, so they hoped, not only preclude any violation of the Berlin Treaty, but would also make it possible to pacify the other disturbed nationalities of the Balkan peninsula, the Servians and Greeks. The diplomacy of the Northern Powers believed that this object could be attained without any great difficulties, and when the Conference assembled with these intentions there was a pretty

general impression that the Bulgarian rebellion would speedily come to an ignominious end. It was clearly beneath her dignity for Europe to let herself be disturbed by the squabbles of petty semi-barbarous peoples; away therefore with the Roumelian revolt and all its consequences! One of the ambassadors was said at that time to have expressed himself as follows: 'Hitherto the revolutions in the Balkan peninsula have always taken place in spring, and the foreign ministers were able to make their arrangements accordingly. They went on leave in the autumn, and were on the spot in the spring when they were wanted. The Bulgarian September Revolution puts these traditions out in the most serious manner; it might establish a precedent for future revolts, and that would derange all diplomatic habits so much that the severest punishments for these impudent innovators will be necessary, if only for this reason.'

Diplomacy, however, had pictured to itself the whole matter as much easier than it really was, and it had overlooked three factors in its calculations which it certainly ought not to have done; they were, England, Turkey, and finally Bulgaria. The ambassadors had given Turkey the urgent advice, immediately after the outbreak of the revolt, to let her troops march at once into Eastern Roumelia and to suppress the rebellion by force of arms. There is every probability that if Turkey had done this with sufficient forces and within the first

three or four days, the Bulgarian movement would indeed have been stifled without any other consequences than the Bulgarian throne becoming vacant. Turkey, however, let that moment go by, partly because she had no faith in the intentions of Russia, who was the most eager in advocating military measures, partly because she had no troops at hand, partly also, perhaps, because she was not over-anxious to retain Eastern Roumelia, and still less anxious to see Prince Alexander replaced at Sofia by a Russian official. Added to this there was the fact that Prince Alexander had, with diplomatic skill, acknowledged the Sultan's suzerainty; furthermore the Sultan's aversion to any war whatever; and in short, the Turks, though mobilising their troops, showed no inclination to assume the offensive. The Conference was to remedy all this, and it did in fact express a desire that the former conditions should be restored in Eastern Roumelia. No sooner, however, was there a question of finding the means of carrying out this desire or order, than behold! it was all over with the unanimity of the European concert, and that England, the same England which had under Beaconsfield dispelled the Great Bulgarian dream, now most emphatically stood up for a Great Bulgaria under Prince Alexander.

Whilst the latter had been half and half excommunicated by the representatives of the other Powers, the English Consul-General, Mr. Lascelles, accompanied him on all his journeys between Sofia and Philippopolis,

and proclaimed thereby openly, and with evident intention, that England had taken the Prince under her protection. The attitude also of the English representative at Constantinople, Sir William White, admitted of no doubt that England would never join in a decision of the Conference directed against Prince Alexander, if it was likely to have any political consequences. One would also not be wrong in assuming that Sir William White used all his influence to prevent Turkey from following the advice of the other Powers. To this was added the fact that France as well assumed a waiting attitude, and at any rate did not show any warm interest in the radical cure proposed by the Northern Powers. The majority of the Conference exhibited great exasperation at the opposition of England, and there was actually a talk of ignoring it altogether; this, however, was not so easily done, particularly as Turkey, the executive power, showed the bad taste of attaching the greatest importance to unanimous decisions at the Conference. But it was especially Russia who was perfectly furious, and that from a twofold reason: firstly, because her plans of deposing the Prince and of punishing those far too independent Bulgarians were thus utterly frustrated; and secondly, because she felt it to be a painful defeat that English influence should supplant the Russian there, where Russian blood had flowed in streams and where Russian money had been spent by millions. Was this to be the final result of a hundred

years of Eastern policy, that hated England should reap without any trouble where Russia had sown with so much? Was it really conceivable that Russia had done nothing but 'travailler pour la Reine d'Angleterre'?

Germany and Austria seemed to have been seized by another suspicion, namely that England, in siding with Bulgaria, was simply making a Machiavellian move to break up the alliance of the three Emperors, so as to make room for another constellation more favourable to her interests. Now, though I can easily understand the indignation of Russia at the protection afforded to her former *protégé* by England, I have never been able to make out why she hit upon the idea that England wanted to endanger the Triple Alliance, and still less can I find a reason for this idea being clung to so obstinately. As regards Russia's complaint of having been ousted by England, it is perfectly true that the latter wielded great influence as the only friend in need, and that hers was often the casting vote in many a proposal. Still, if ever the influence of a foreign Power should become paramount in Bulgaria, it would certainly not be that of England. I am no great believer in the gratitude of nations, and even if the Bulgarians were to possess this exceptional attribute, they would be forced, both by circumstances and by their own interests, which point to the Continent and not to the distant Island Kingdom, to keep their gratitude within

bounds. Austria and Germany presumably hit upon the idea that England wished to sow discord amongst the Northern Powers, because they could find no other explanation, and yet a very different one is to be found not so very far off. Repeated opportunities have occurred for discovering that the political influence of the Queen of England, notwithstanding a parliamentary government, had been of decisive weight. Now, it is well known that Queen Victoria has accepted as son-in-law a brother of Prince Alexander, and that she has altogether shown herself very favourably disposed towards the Battenberg family. Possibly one may find in this some clue to the influences which actuated the conduct of England.

I have already stated that the opinion which had been formed concerning the Bulgarians themselves was also a very wrong one. Nobody had thought that the movement would grow so quietly and so rapidly, for when Turkey and the majority of the Powers at last began to put their idea of a military intervention into practical shape, it was too late; that is, too late if the original aim, the maintenance of peace in general, was kept in view. From the moment that the Bulgarian army had effected its mobilisation, the occupation of Eastern Roumelia by the Turks would no longer have been a simple matter of police duty, supported by the army, but it would have meant actual sanguinary war, which could not have been ended at one blow. Who

can say what attitude public opinion in Russia would have assumed towards such an event, and whether it would not have forced the Government to save the Bulgarians from complete annihilation? And what would Austria have done if Russia had marched into Bulgaria; what Servia and Greece? The whole Eastern question would have been opened up, with every prospect of a collision between two of the great European Powers. I think the three Emperors might well congratulate themselves that their peace programme has been carried out by others, and in spite of themselves.

That there was serious danger of a revolt in Macedonia—and on the Turks entering, it would have broken out at once—has even been acknowledged by the Powers themselves, and that in a somewhat original manner. After the ambassadors had been in consultation at Constantinople for some time, they informed Prince Alexander that the insurrectionary movement must on no account be permitted to spread, and especially that he was held responsible for the maintenance of peace in Macedonia. Now, since Macedonia, as is well known, is a Turkish province with which the Prince of Bulgaria had no concern, and in which therefore it was not his business to preserve peace and quiet, this summons was, at least in point of *form*, a very unusual one. Still, as a matter of fact, the situation was such that the Prince of Bulgaria had it in his power any day to start a revolt in Macedonia; he needed only to apply the torch to the

rich store of inflammable material ready at hand. But this material might also have been ignited spontaneously, and to prevent that was a difficult task even for the Prince of Bulgaria. Now the Bulgarians were naturally very anxious not to exasperate the Powers still further, and therefore there was much cogitation as to what could be done to effectually guarantee the peace in Macedonia. They thought it over and over again, and finally hit upon a plan truly original. They said to themselves that a disturbance of the peace could only originate with those unruly spirits then so numerous in Macedonia, who find a certain professional delight in every kind of fighting, who are always on bad terms with the powers that be, who during a revolt are styled 'Bashi Bazouks,' but at other times are mostly called 'brigands.' Now these elements had to be worked upon, but how? The proposal to address them an energetically worded diplomatic note, enjoining the maintenance of peace and harmony, was rejected as promising but scant results, and it was quickly resolved to *enlist* the whole of them, and to incorporate them with the Bulgarian army. Thus they would be kept under control and rendered harmless. No sooner said than done; two officers started for the Macedonian frontier, and a few days later reappeared in triumph, accompanied by 3,000 Macedonian 'brigands,' to the scant delight of the Greeks at Philippopolis, who were quite prepared to see their shops plundered in the orthodox fashion. And

so it came about that Macedonia was spared a rebellion, whilst the Bulgarian army, at the direct instigation of the Powers, had its numbers increased by the so-called 'Brigand Brigade,' which, however, was composed, besides doubtful elements, of many men who had left their country and placed themselves at the disposal of Prince Alexander, principally from national and patriotic motives. We shall meet with these wild fellows again later on.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FEELING IN BULGARIA.

Prince Alexander's increasing authority—Resolute determination of the Bulgarians to maintain the union—Karaweloff, Tsanoff, Stranski.

UNQUESTIONABLY the Bulgarians, and particularly the originators of the rebellion, had pictured to themselves the whole thing as being much easier than it really was, but they had especially made a miscalculation in looking upon the aid of Russia as a matter of course, whilst no power placed such difficulties in the way of their desires as Russia herself. If the affection for Russia had already been exceedingly cold in former days, it now turned into the exact opposite, and particularly the recall of the Russian officers showed, in the words of a saying at that time current in Sofia, that Russia, though loving Bulgaria, did not love the Bulgarians. This cutting measure brought about yet another result; the great mass of the population, who stood far removed from all politics, had up to now believed in the thoughtful love and kindness of the Czar as in a kind of gospel, whilst the political and leading circles, in a

word the intelligence of the country, had for some time past gone on another line. Now, however, that recall took place, and the dullest intellect could not help taking in this fact, so tangible in its bare brutality. If ever any one could speak of a *demonstratio ad oculos*, this was certainly one, for every soldier, every peasant, saw with his own eyes that Bulgaria was being forsaken by Russia, and that too at a moment when she was surrounded on all sides by the most terrible dangers. If the meaning of the watchword 'Bulgaria for the Bulgarians' had formerly not been quite taken in by the lower classes, everyone now was able fully to realise its meaning on seeing themselves deserted and sacrificed by the Czar. The idea of the union had been fostered in their minds by Russia, now they saw or imagined they saw themselves betrayed, and the result was that instead of despairing they simply turned away from Russia.

The sympathies which thus, so to speak, were set free, sought a new object of affection, and found the same in Prince Alexander! Deserted by Russia, with all the world for enemy, the Bulgarians henceforth trusted only themselves and rallied round their Prince with unanimity. The Russian party was a thing of the past, and the few clients of the Russian Consulate at Sofia only constituted a clique, which, very clearly recognising its own impotence, no longer dared to show itself in public. On Prince Alexander, however, who by

his incessant and self-sacrificing labour made himself the representative of the wishes of the nation, who traversed Eastern Roumelia from one end to the other, inspecting his soldiers and preparing them for the fray, on him the sympathies of all were concentrated, and for the first time the Prince was able to say that he was truly at one with his people. In the eyes of the nation he appeared as the embodiment of their aspirations, he alone seemed to present the guarantee for a happy future. There was a time when his deposition by the Powers was expected, and Prince Alexander had prepared himself for that event and arrived at his decision accordingly. If his deposition was to be the price of the acknowledgment of the accomplished fact and the concession of the Bulgarian union, he was determined to be no obstacle in the way of his people, but to renounce his crown and to leave the country. I discussed this question with the Premier, M. Karaweloff, on October 8, when he assured me that: 'The Prince's resolve to sacrifice himself for his country is very noble minded, but we shall not let him go. If the Powers want the Prince, let them fetch him; we shall certainly not give him up voluntarily. We have only now found out how much he is to us; the people and the Prince are one, and as United Bulgaria belongs to Prince Alexander, so does Prince Alexander belong to United Bulgaria!' On my asking what would be done if Prince Alexander wanted to leave the country notwithstanding all en-

treaties, Karaweloff replied shortly: 'In that case I shall retain him by force.' 'However,' he added, 'that will be quite unnecessary, for if the Prince wanted to leave the country, the people would of their own accord take the horses out of his carriage and carry him back to his palace in triumph. It would be base and dishonourable if the Bulgarians were to act in any other way.' Indeed I believe that the Bulgarians would not have allowed the Prince to depart under any circumstances, and that one might have witnessed the curious spectacle of a *Prince malgré lui*. The Prince's winning and impressive personality, his resolute and self-assured bearing, the consciousness that the maintenance of tranquillity and order in the land was entirely dependent on him, that tended to give him the strongest possible position in the country. Yet another factor was added; the men who had inscribed 'Bulgaria for the Bulgarians' on their banners could not close their eyes to the fact that the Prince's overthrow was synonymous with the establishment of a Russian viceroyalty, and that the independence of Bulgaria was only safeguarded in the Prince's person. The outcome of this was a tie based on common sense, which gave rise to the following remark from a Bulgarian well known for his republican proclivities, 'If the powers depose the Prince, we shall simply proclaim the Balkan Republic, and elect the Prince President for life.' I do not attach any weight

to this bold speech, but I merely mention it as a sign of the feeling of the times.

The most perfect accord existed among the Bulgarians as to not letting themselves be induced by intimidations or threats of any kind to give up the union, no matter how heavy the sacrifices were that this course might impose upon the country. This was patent, not only from their words but also from their deeds—from the cheerful way the levies hurried in to their colours, from the willing way all requisitions were borne, which make themselves so heavily felt everywhere, but especially with such a thrifty people as the Bulgarians. 'It seems to be universally taken for granted,' a Bulgarian said to me, 'that we are barbarians; consequently we need not understand the wording of diplomatic notes, and need not show paper documents any respect. If the Powers send off 100,000 men to subdue us by force, of course we shall not be able to offer any resistance; as long, however, as they do not do that, we shall not give up the union.' And the Bulgarians were shrewd enough to know that the Powers would never agree upon the despatch of troops, or even upon any practical coercive measure. I can give the assurance that they never entertained the slightest doubt on that point; any one who was staying in Bulgaria that October, and was at all initiated into the state of affairs, was bound to know that all resolutions of the Conference were doomed in advance

to collapse, and that nothing would be accomplished by those means.

The Powers alone would not realise this, and wasted their time in the useless attempt to restore the former conditions in Eastern Roumelia by peaceful means.

In the same proportion that Prince Alexander's intention of arriving at an amicable agreement with Turkey became more evident, the feeling of the Mahomedans, who observed a friendly neutrality towards the Prince, became more favourable. Very curious and significant was the reaction caused by this; the Bulgarians saw themselves ill-treated by all the world, even by those to whom they had never done any harm; whilst the Turks, the only ones who had just cause to entertain animosity against the Bulgarians, were quiet, even friendly within the country, and showed a lenient and conciliatory disposition in their diplomacy.

The Bulgarians were *bound* to make comparisons, and slowly and by degrees an entire revulsion of feelings was being prepared, the improbability of which was afterwards only to be surpassed by its intensity.

And now just a word about the third nationality in Eastern Roumelia—the Greeks. As the principal traders of Eastern Roumelia, living close together in a few towns, and disposing of considerable means, they were decidedly opposed to the union of the two Bulgarias. They were very well satisfied with the former conditions, thinking that thus the fruit would best

ripen which was destined some day to drop into the lap of great 'Hellas.' They wished for the arrival of the Turkish troops; told everyone who chose to listen that the Bulgarian movement was sure to come to an ignominious end, showed paroxysms of fear—and did nothing, nothing at all. Stop!—they *did* do something, for later on, when the Servian War broke out, and the Roumelian reserves were called out, including, of course, the Greeks, their Bishop went to the Prefect of Philippopolis, and begged that the Greek heroes might be dispensed from war service. This request was granted with the greatest readiness, and it would seem as if the Bulgarian army had not lost very much by it. This is all that can be said about the Greeks.

At this point, where mention has been made of public mood and public opinion, that result of the influence of individuals on the masses, I should like to give a description of those persons who stood in the fore-front of the public interest during the Bulgarian complications; viz. the Prime Minister *Karaweloff*, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, *Tsanoff*, and the head of the Eastern Roumelian Revolutionary Committee, *Dr. Stranski*.

At the time when Prince Alexander undertook the government of the country there was an utter lack of individuals of Bulgarian nationality who were capable of governing. Culture was then and is to this day very far from being even in the slightest degree the common

property of the nation, or even from being spread to any great extent, and the few individuals who had acquired a higher degree of learning were wanting in the special training required for the duties of Government offices. The 'upper ten thousand,' or more correctly speaking the 'upper fifties,' on the whole hardly differed from their fellow-citizens either inwardly or outwardly, and the Prince who was constrained to govern with them had, so to speak, to dive into the crowd and to bring up his ministers frequently out of quite subordinate positions. Small tradesmen, simple schoolmasters, were suddenly turned into 'Right Honourables,' and it was not surprising that they were very frequently not equal to their new position, especially as they had to handle the complicated constitution left behind by Prince Dondukoff-Korsakoff, as a 'gift of the Danai' which was intended for quite modern and highly civilised conditions. Many of them failed from want of ability, others who had rapidly acquired a lively appreciation of political ambition outstepped all reasonable bounds in their youthful ardour, indulged in the paradoxes of demagogues, and promised to become a curse rather than a blessing to their country. In that category *Karaweloff* would have had to be classed if in the course of a few years a complete change had not taken place in the man. The wild demagogue was turned into an able statesman, the passionate adversary of Prince Alexander became his most demonstrative partisan.

It would be very simple and natural to explain this change by the fact that demagogues frequently have disavowed their former principles as soon as they have come into power, and taken the oath of allegiance to the standard they had formerly fought against so energetically. With most men of that kind such an explanation would have been the right one, but in this case it is not so. Karaweloff's political career, with all its manifold changes, was not the consequence of calm calculation, but rather served him as a school of experience. Learning at every turn, assisted by his natural intelligence, turning every new experience to account, growing inwardly and outwardly with his tasks, Karaweloff has now come to be a true statesman, of whom, no matter how the present conditions may change, the Bulgarians may well be proud, as he represents a truly national product. To this day Karaweloff would not be a model minister for an old European State, and the rigid etiquette of many a sovereign's court would have much to find fault with in him. Before he became a Cabinet Minister he was a simple schoolmaster; when he was turned out of office the first time, he quietly resumed the modest work of a pedagogue, and if he were once more to lose his position as Minister, he would, unlike his European colleagues, neither be able to retire to his country-seat nor to live on his pension, but would once more take up his schoolmastering, without, however, abjuring all political life; for politicians resemble lions;

if they have once lapped blood they never lose the taste for it. The European Prime Minister, according to the general and, on the whole, quite correct conception, is, as far as the outer man is concerned, either a dignified stiff gentleman, imbued with his own importance, or a cultured man of the world with admirable manners, who displays equal neatness in the turn of his phrases and the choice of his irreproachable garments. Neither cap fits Karaweloff. He has never been at pains to make believe that he had been, to use a French expression, 'brought up in the lap of duchesses,' and the black buttoned-up frock coat is evidently not his favourite garment. He very much prefers wearing a plain coat made of coarse, dull-coloured Bulgarian homespun, and I have only observed him wearing the sacred 'stove-pipe hat' on very special occasions. In a country like Bulgaria, where as a matter of fact absolute equality flourishes, where an aristocracy does not even exist in imagination, in that 'monarchical republic of peasants,' there is really no reason why one should distinguish the Minister from the remainder of his fellow citizens as is the case in European countries. I confess that, on the contrary, I rather like Karaweloff's not wishing to appear different from what he is, and as such I infinitely prefer him to the European upstart, who, on attaining an unexpectedly high position, apes manners and customs that are quite strange to his bringing up and that moreover suit him very badly. And if Karaweloff's

demeanour is simple and unassuming, his appearance is by no means a caricature. As regards his conversation I certainly believe that it would be impossible to carry on a so-called 'drawing-room conversation' with him, but this defect is fully compensated for by the genuine amiability with which he meets his visitor, by his unconstrained, fresh, and extraordinarily animated manner, and by his confident, sanguine, and withal sensible bearing. He knows how to enter into another man's train of thought with admirable rapidity, he grasps his views in the twinkling of an eye, and his short and telling replies invariably give one ample and complete information about what one may want to know. Long dissertations, misunderstandings, explanations, are things one never meets with in him. The most remarkable of all, however, is that Karaweloff exhibits this same unerring vision, this same quick comprehension, even when one converses with him in a language of which he is not quite master.

Such a conference with Karaweloff is decidedly curious. Of foreign languages he understands German, French, English, and Italian, as well as most Oriental languages; that is to say, he can read those languages, and understands them, but can only speak them indifferently. For that reason he often employs an interpreter, but only for his replies, whilst he perfectly understands what the other party may be saying in, say, French or German. Clearness of comprehension and of expression,

keen perception of any situation, prompt determined action, and a surprising understanding for political situations, these are the qualities which no one who knows that interesting man can deny him.

Very unlike Karaweloff in his outward manner is *Tsanoff*, the Foreign Minister. Whilst the former is animated and easily excited, Tsanoff is endowed with extraordinary calmness, which he allows nothing to disturb. He knows exactly what he wants, and follows up his aim with undeviating steadiness of purpose, without however being obstinate or pigheaded in the choice of his means, which are changed as often as it seems expedient. He is full of resource, manages to reconcile himself to all situations, knows a way out of every difficulty, and is never surprised at anything. Tsanoff, who before the Russian War was a barrister, and who speaks Turkish fluently, puts one in mind in many ways of those Turks who have made the fame of Oriental politics, and like them he has at his command a large store of 'finesse.' Amiable and engaging in personal intercourse, with a great sense of humour and fond of entertaining talk, the Foreign Minister of Bulgaria must be regarded as the man who in concert with Prince Alexander was called upon to conduct one of the most difficult campaigns that ever fell to the lot of a diplomatist. His notes were always clever; occasionally, as for instance the circular note in which the declaration of war by Servia was notified to the Powers, they were true masterpieces, as has been

acknowledged by all diplomatists. Tsanoff himself is very well satisfied with his own notes, and does not at all dislike hearing others express their admiration of them. When I was at Constantinople in January 1886, I was told a story about him which is too good to be kept back. Before Tsanoff became Minister he was the Bulgarian diplomatic agent at Constantinople, and at that time, amongst many others, the following dispute arose between Bulgaria and Turkey. Bulgaria, it seems, put forward a claim to transact business through the Foreign Office, like other countries, whilst Turkey wished her transactions with Bulgaria, as a vassal State, to pass through the Home Office. Accordingly, Tsanoff addressed his notes to the Foreign Office, but had them always returned with the request to send them to the Home Office; and if he tried to interview the Foreign Minister he was not admitted. Now one day Tsanoff delivered a note at the Foreign Office in person, which seems to have contained particularly strong pretensions, for the Minister got so angry that he hastily ordered Tsanoff to be brought in and addressed to him the following homily: 'How dare you make such an unheard of demand? This really outsteps all limits! Moreover, you know perfectly well that your only business is with the Home Office, and I must inform you that I do not want to see you here again!' With that Tsanoff was kicked out, of course only morally, and *avec tous les égards dus à son rang*. Not the least disconcerted he went straight

home, took his best pen, and wrote a note in something like the following terms to the Grand Vizier: 'After the deplorable divergence of opinion which had hitherto existed between the interested parties concerning the course of business between the Sublime Porte and Bulgaria, it was a source of high satisfaction to him to be able to inform His Highness the Grand Vizier that His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs had had the kindness to receive him in person that day, justifying thereby the view of the case always entertained by the Bulgarian Government. He (Tsanoff) was overjoyed at the friendly dispositions of the Sublime Porte towards himself and the Government he represented, which had been proved anew by the establishment of this precedent, and he would make it his business to zealously cultivate the relations with the Foreign Office which had been opened up in such a pleasant manner.'

Great astonishment on the part of the Grand Vizier on receipt of this letter. The Foreign Minister is sent for at once, and the following dialogue takes place:

'How on earth could you receive that fellow Tsanoff?'

'Tsanoff? I never have received him!'

'But here is his letter saying that you did receive him.'

'I did not receive him, I simply kicked him out.'

'To be able to kick him out you *must* have received him to begin with.'

There was no getting over this logic. The Turks, who are the greatest sticklers at form in the world, had

exhaustive consultations on this difficult case at law, and finally arrived at the conclusion that unquestionably a precedent had been established which could not be ignored. And so Tsanoff was able henceforth to continue the 'relations with the Foreign Office which had been opened up in such a pleasant manner.'

Together with Karaweloff and Tsanoff, must be mentioned one who at first was brought into prominence still more than they, namely *Dr. Stranski*, by profession a medical practitioner, late Director of Finance at Philippopolis, member of the Revolutionary Committee, chairman of the Provisional Government, and Prince Alexander's accredited representative in Eastern Roumelia. Stranski is not possessed of any very marked individuality, as, in fact, the revolutionary committee in general partook of what I should like to call an impersonal character. What distinguishes Stranski from his companions is great calmness and circumspection, and perhaps it was precisely on account of these qualities that he was chosen as their chief by the others, amongst whom there were some impassioned hot-heads.

It is undeniable that he guided the preparations with skill, and that he rendered great services to the cause of the revolt; but when it was a case of guiding the Government of the country under difficult circumstances as the Prince's representative, faults and mistakes occurred which could have been prevented. The fusion of the Bulgarian and Eastern Roumelian Ad-

ministration did away with the position that Stranski had occupied, and since then he has completely retired into the background. Fate or chance had placed him in a position in which he did not know how to maintain himself.

CHAPTER VII.

SOFIA AND PHILIPPOPOLIS.

The difference between the two towns—The 'Konak' at Philippopolis and the Palace at Sofia—Material comforts and social life—The Prince's influence on the development of Sofia.

THE change in the political situations made it necessary for me to change my abode repeatedly, so that I found myself sometimes at Philippopolis, sometimes at Sofia. Both towns offer rich opportunities for studying modern Oriental conditions and comparing the progress made.

Sofia already occupies, in more than one respect, an exceptional position among Eastern towns. In Philippopolis also a good many substantial and European-looking houses have been built, more especially in the streets leading to the railway station, but the progress has been slow and the public buildings in particular show little in the way of modern innovations. Take the 'Konak' for instance, which until quite lately harboured Gavril Pasha Krestowitch, and which has repeatedly served as Prince Alexander's headquarters. It is true that behind the Konak a very neat-looking garden has been laid out, but in what a state of

neglect is the Konak itself! On reaching the spacious outer courtyard one would fancy one's self to be looking at a gigantic 'Khan' or large Eastern 'caravanserai' instead of the residence of his Excellency the Governor-General of Eastern Roumelia, guaranteed by the Great Powers for five years, to whom, be it said in parenthesis, this guarantee has not been of much use. Penetrating into the Konak itself, you find a curious mixture of pretentious modern furniture placed in large reception-rooms, the poor and miserable decorations of which form a crying contrast to the gilded and silk-covered sofas and chairs, although for these only a third-rate quality of material has been used. Evidently the decorators thought that having thus reached the utmost conceivable limits of luxury, there remained nothing further to be done. Accordingly, the walls have been pasted over with the cheapest of wall-papers, the wooden ceilings simply whitewashed, a few cheap curtains put up at the windows, and, above all, the means of artificial heating provided, by carrying black stove-pipes to as great a length as possible through the rooms, which may be useful, but is certainly not ornamental. From the windows there is the immediate view of an extraordinary wilderness which is in reality a kitchen garden, and where a quantity of tangled-looking shrubs grow luxuriantly.

I have nearly forgotten the carpet which covers the entire floor of the principal reception-room, and that would

have been a great pity, for this carpet has a history of its own and was at one time the cause of political complications. On one occasion when Aleko Pasha returned to Philippopolis from leave of absence, he brought back this carpet and adorned the above-mentioned room with it. The Roumelians had no fault to find with this, but the aspect of things was considerably changed when Aleko requested the province to pay for the carpet. The committee of ways and means declared that such a carpet was much too good for Aleko Pasha, and refused the payment of it. Aleko, who was otherwise an even-tempered man, flew into a violent passion, dismissed his director of finance, and began casting about for another. At last one was found whose whole political and financial programme consisted in declaring himself ready to pay for the carpet.

The unsuspicious traveller who arrives at Philippopolis must be prepared to find himself but scantily provided with European comforts. The 'Hotels' are fitted up in the simplest manner conceivable, and the various establishments that cater for the inner man are in the hands of cooks who evidently never attended a school of cookery, or if so, with an all but imperceptible result. Luckily, however, there are certain raw materials which even they cannot spoil. As a matter of curiosity which will probably give rise to a good deal of envy at home, let it be stated here that partridges at Philippopolis are counted amongst the good things which even a poor man, if he so will, can

have on his table every day. Anyhow an improvement on former times is unmistakable even here, and though one must renounce comfort in general and shut both eyes with regard to cleanliness, still there is no actual danger of starvation, as was the case in former years, for a European, even in towns like Tirnowa.

Very different from this are the conditions of life at Sofia, where, since Prince Alexander's accession, an almost entirely European town has sprung up. The old native quarter of course retains its Eastern character, but the new portions bear a strong resemblance to any European suburb. The Palace, the Public Offices, the handsome and tasteful buildings of some of the Consulates—the German, by the way, is very modest—the modern hotels, amongst which the 'Hôtel de Bulgarie' would satisfy all the requirements of the largest European capitals; all these make you almost forget that you are at some distance from the centre of civilisation. Material comforts are on the whole well provided for, and any one who knows how to adapt himself to circumstances has really no cause for complaint. Even at Philippopolis the vanguard of 'the Beer' is encountered on its triumphant progress through the world; but here the main body has already taken up its quarters, and there is not only no want of 'beer-sources,' but no want of those bringing forth the right stuff. Both as the provider of material comforts, and as the centre of social intercourse, the latest acquisition deserves men-

tion: 'The Union Club,' started about a year ago, and counting amongst its members the diplomatic and consular bodies, the high officials, and the majority of people holding any distinguished position in the town. The fact that the Club opens its doors in the most hospitable manner to any passing stranger, offering him a share of all its advantages in the shape of pleasant company, excellent 'cuisine,' and its abundant choice of newspapers and periodicals, has no small share in making life at Sofia very bearable indeed, and in preventing the feeling of being in 'the far far East' from making itself felt. The day is to all appearance no longer distant when it will even be possible to approach the Club along a broad and clean pavement, and if once that point is attained, one will hardly notice any trace of Oriental discomforts, and might imagine one's self to be living in a pleasant second-rate European town.

The endeavour to modernise, which though not always, must here certainly be taken as being synonymous with 'to improve,' is apparent in the entire new quarter of the town. Thus among other things, there is already a public garden prettily laid out, where military bands play, and where comfortable seats and other advantages usually unknown in the East are to be found. These, as I was told, did not at first call forth the approval of the Bulgarians in any marked degree, but ultimately came to be fully appreciated by them. What is at once noticeable in this part of Sofia, and

what invests it with a character of its own, is the fact that all these improvements are evidently carried out according to a fixed and well-considered plan, turning them into an harmonious whole. The Prince's Palace, which, so to speak, stands out as the background to these gardens, has not its equal throughout the East excepting in Constantinople; not that it is of extraordinary size, or built in a pretentious or gorgeous style, but that it presents at the same time a simple and yet distinguished appearance, and exactly fulfils all the requirements for which it was intended. The Palace is not only a residence worthy of the ruler of the country, but it is an ornament to the town and a model which has not failed to exert its proper influence, as is proved by many a copy of smaller dimensions. About three million francs were expended on this building, a sum which appeared very exorbitant to the Bulgarian Parliament during the two years of its construction, and which gave rise to a good deal of complaint. The last instalments of the costs were only voted very reluctantly, and this unfavourable opinion was only changed when the edifice was completed, and the Prince was able to invite the whole National Assembly to a 'fête' in his new palace. It seems that at first the deputies were of opinion that it was simply impossible to spend three millions in building one single palace, and they required to have it proved by ocular demonstration that their money had not been thrown away. This proof, however, succeeded

most perfectly, and the deputies exhibited the greatest surprise on being shown a thing of which they had not had the slightest conception hitherto. That this Palace was something very different from the old Konaks of the Pashas, which formerly were their embodiment of all that was rich and luxurious, at once became patent to their intellect, and a pleasant sensation of pride made itself felt at the thought that it was *they* who had created for their Prince this residence, a thing unheard of in the annals of Bulgaria. Ever since, the complaints about the excessive cost of the Palace have altogether ceased, and but few Bulgarians would be found who would be ready to do away with the building and to get back their money if they had the chance. What principally influenced them was the impression produced by the whole; what principally interests the European visitor in the building is the endeavour, which is evident everywhere, to combine a certain substantial simplicity with good taste. It is an easy thing to create a palace of marvels with unlimited wealth; to produce something handsome and distinguished-looking with limited means has rarely succeeded so well as in this instance. The actual state-apartments are only few in number, but nothing has been spared in their fittings and decorations, and though all overloading has been carefully avoided, their effect is rich and sumptuous. The other rooms are furnished more with a view to cosiness and comfort, and they fulfil their object admirably.

The Prince's study, preserving throughout the purest German '*renaissance*' style, the dining-room and the so-called 'Bulgarian Hall,' decorated with Bulgarian arms and trophies, are especially noticeable for the perfect taste with which they are fitted up, and would be an ornament to any king's palace. One suite of apartments is as yet bare or at least very scantily furnished; they await the arrival of the wife whom Prince Alexander will some day bring to his home in Sofia.

A curious reflection forces itself upon one's mind on ascending the broad marble steps of the stately flight of stairs, and then contrasting them with the recollection of the wretched Konak of Philippopolis. Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia were simultaneously given the right freely to dispose of their own destinies. In both countries advances were made. If, then, Eastern Roumelia retained its Oriental character, whilst Bulgaria, at least in her capital, made a gigantic stride towards European customs, the reason must be found in the fact that the one country, Eastern Roumelia, was left to her own resources, whilst Bulgaria received a powerful stimulus towards 'Europeisation' from a European Prince. That this Prince is a German, and that with him not only the European, but a very great deal of the German element has been introduced into that country, is a fact which, I think, we Germans in particular ought not to forget.

CHAPTER VIII.

SERVIA APPEARS ON THE SCENE.

The hostile intentions of Servia towards Bulgaria more and more evident—King Milan refuses to receive a letter from Prince Alexander—The Prince's name is erased from the lists of the Russian army—An abortive measure—The Bulgarian Mahomedans offer their services to the Prince for a war with Servia—Violations of the frontier by Servia—The declaration of war.

THE scales in which the fate of Bulgaria was being weighed at the Conference rose at one moment in her favour, only to descend rapidly at the next, when unexpectedly, about the middle of October, a new factor presented itself, on which, at least in Bulgaria, no one had counted. Servia, from whom complaints arose about disturbance of the equilibrium in the Balkan peninsula, that had so far appeared only to contain a threat against Turkey, suddenly veered round and declared she would seek compensation for this disturbance in *Bulgaria*. She informed the Powers that the deliberations of the Conference were too long-winded to suit her, and that she was determined to force the Bulgarians on her own account to respect the Berlin Treaty. Several of the Powers—and I believe Germany was one of them—tried

to damp this excessive ardour by the aid of diplomatic remonstrances, whilst others did not seem altogether displeased at Servia assuming the part of the 'Policeman of Europe.' It was only in Bulgaria that the people could not bring themselves to believe that Servia really had serious intentions of carrying on such a fratricidal war, and when the concentration of Servian troops on the Bulgarian frontier finally assumed threatening proportions, the Bulgarians had no other thoughts than that this 'misunderstanding' must be cleared up at all hazards. Prince Alexander himself was of opinion that this could be easily done by an open and honest explanation, and to this end he wrote a letter to King Milan, charging his former Minister of Finance, M. Grekoff, to be its bearer. At the same time King Milan was informed by telegraph that Grekoff would proceed at once with this letter to his headquarters at Nish. It was by telegraph also that the most unexpected of replies was received. King Milan declined even to accept Prince Alexander's letter, and to add to the insult, the Servian telegram was—contrary to all usages—not sent in cipher. The Servian semi-official newspapers simultaneously declared that the acceptance of the letter had been declined, as it could only contain a proposal to make common cause against Turkey. King Milan, it was said, had, however, too much respect for existing treaties to embark upon such a venture, and, moreover, con-

sidered it below his dignity to go hand in hand with the revolutionary politics of Bulgaria. Now, as it so happened, it was not true that the letter contained any proposal of joint-action against Turkey, as its subsequent publication proved. Still King Milan's unprecedented proceeding, in pretending to know the contents of a letter without having read it, gave so plain an indication of the ill-will of Servia that Prince Alexander was forced to take measures of precaution. Several battalions accordingly were ordered to start for Bulgaria and the Servian frontier, the Bulgarian reserves were called out, and the fortifying of the position at Slivnitza, which covers Sofia, was taken in hand. At that very time Prince Alexander received a most unexpected aid; the Mahomedans in Eastern Bulgaria, in the districts of Varna and Shumla, spontaneously declared themselves prepared to take up arms for the Prince, and to furnish a corps of 6,000 volunteers to fight the Servians, equipping the former at their own cost. This piece of news, the reward of Prince Alexander's humane and conciliatory policy, produced an extraordinary impression. It now became evident how deeply rooted the memory of the rule of the scimitar and the high estimation of Turkish valour was still in Bulgaria. However much they prized the material assistance, the moral effect was yet greater. A Bulgarian soldier found an expression for this which in its simple-mindedness is very much to the point: 'Now,'

he said to me, 'peace is assured, for how will the Servians dare attack us if the Turks go with us?' The favourable disposition towards the Turks increased more and more. To give this feeling an extraordinary impetus, only one more contrast was necessary, and this was to be provided by the Russians. On November 7, at the moment when Bulgaria, persecuted by all Europe, saw her frontiers threatened in the east and the south and the west, the news came from St. Petersburg that the Czar Alexander III. had, by an order of the day, erased the name of Prince Alexander of Bulgaria, Russian general, and honorary colonel of the 13th rifle battalion, from the lists of the Russian army. It was evident that the greatest hopes had been based at St. Petersburg on this measure, called forth by extreme personal animosity, and which could have no other object than that of separating Prince Alexander altogether from his people. It was thought that it would have an overpowering effect on the Bulgarians, and once again, as in the episode of the officers, it turned out to be a complete miscalculation, for this outbreak of imperial temper was followed, not by fear and consternation, but by universal indignation. Every Bulgarian felt himself struck and insulted in the person of his Prince, and it was then that I heard for the first time from Bulgarian lips the cry, 'Rather Turkish than Russian!' This order of the Emperor Alexander III., given in a moment of sudden anger, and against the

advice of his Ministers, Giers and Obrutscheff, has contributed enormously towards spreading Turkish sympathies. Prince Alexander himself was the calmest of all, and declined to entertain any proposals of violent replies. Some wanted him to issue a manifesto to his people; others that the prayers for the Czar, which to this day are offered up every Sunday in all Bulgarian churches, should be discontinued; others again urged the immediate return of all Russian decorations. This last proposal, however, had to be dropped, seeing that, in view of the recent episode of the Spanish general, Salamanca, who had returned his Prussian decoration on account of the Caroline Islands dispute, it was quite inadmissible unless the Prince wished to figure in every European lampoon as in the same boat with the Spaniard. If Prince Alexander allowed this insult to go by without a reply, it was because he placed the interests of his country higher than his personal feelings, and did not wish to give Russia any pretext for an armed intervention. But he felt it all the same, especially when he remembered the kind and fatherly way with which the Emperor Alexander II. had always treated him. However, a satisfaction was not wanting, and that was that the Bulgarians stood by him all the more firmly in spite of the insult, and that Germany and Austria very decidedly declined a proposal on the part of Russia to remove him from the lists of their armies as well. The excess of persecution which was exhibited in this

measure was universally condemned; and it was then that public opinion for the first time showed a strong feeling of sympathy for the young Prince, which he retained to the end, and which proved to be a faithful and not powerless friend.

Perhaps Servia looked upon the name of Prince Alexander being erased from the Russian army list as an encouragement of her hostile intentions towards Bulgaria; at any rate a number of violations of the frontier began on November 10, which were evidently intended to provoke the Bulgarians and bring about a collision which would constitute a 'casus belli.' From Trn, Kustendil, Zaribrod, despatches from the commanders of the Bulgarian outposts kept on coming in, reporting that Servian detachments had crossed the frontier first here, then there, and had fired on the Bulgarians. Prince Alexander, who was then at Philippopolis, instantly sent the most stringent orders not on any account to respond to the Servian provocations, and only to repel an actual attack. With every hour the situation became more strained, and on November 13 a telegram reached Philippopolis to the effect that the Servians had moved their outposts on to Bulgarian territory and had then attacked a Bulgarian company, being however repulsed with a loss of eight killed. At the same time a bitter war of diplomatic notes was commenced, in which the Servians with astonishing boldness pretended they never had crossed into Bulgarian territory at all,

but had actually been attacked by the Bulgarians on Servian ground. A better proof than all the diplomatic notes in the world of the falseness of this assertion is contained in the simple fact that the Bulgarians must have been positively mad, if they, who had the greatest possible interest in the maintenance of peace, had challenged the Servians through violations of the frontier or any other kind of provocation. In the face of these occurrences, it seemed all but impossible that the peace between Servia and Bulgaria could be maintained. Prince Alexander, his officers and his ministers, could not but admit to themselves that Servia was seeking a pretext for war with all her might; and yet, curious though it may seem, they did not believe in the possibility of war till the very last moment. It appeared impossible for the Bulgarians to get accustomed to the idea of such an unnatural, such an unjust war, and, moreover, the general opinion was that Servia, by raising the war-cry and by apparent eagerness for the fray, merely wanted to exert a pressure on the resolutions of the Powers. On the evening of November 13 I was with M. Karaweloff at his office, and was told by him that a despatch had just been received, according to which the Servian army appeared to contemplate a general change of front to the right in the direction of Leskowatz, that is, towards the Turkish frontier. 'Let us hope,' he added, 'that they will leave us in peace after all,' and with this hope I retired to rest. At three

o'clock in the morning there was a loud knocking at my door. Astonished at this nocturnal disturbance I opened it, still barely awake, and an orderly entered the room handing me a slip of paper containing the following laconic message from Baron Riedesel, the comptroller of the Prince's household: 'Servia has declared war. His Highness starts for Sofia at once!' A quarter of an hour later I was at the Konak; in the anteroom I met Karaweloff, appearing quite bowed down and broken by the terrible and unexpected piece of news.

'*Ça y est?*'

'*Ça y est!*'

That was all he said, entering into his room, through the open door of which he could be seen making preparations for his departure. I managed to make my way through the crowd of servants who ran hither and thither and were occupied with packing, into the presence of Baron Riedesel, who was only able to supplement his written communication to the effect that war was not only declared, but that according to the Servian announcement hostilities were already to commence on November 14 at six in the morning, —only two hours from now! He told me the Prince was working with the Adjutant-General Petroff, and that the whole of the troops were to be moved towards the seat of war with the utmost rapidity.

As quickly as possible I returned to my hotel to make my own preparations for starting at once for Sofia

and the seat of war. I packed up my belongings, ordered a carriage with four good horses, and at six o'clock I was ready for a start. Meanwhile the news of the declaration of war had spread in the town, and the streets quickly filled with people. In the principal square of the town, immediately under my windows, a battalion of the 'Alexander Regiment' had fallen in, ready to march out—to its usual drill. Suddenly the commanding officer, who was on horseback at the head of his men, received the news of the war having been declared, and at the same time an order to march his battalion as quickly as possible to the railway station to have it 'entrained' for the rail head at Sarambey. In a few words he communicated this to his men, and what now took place I shall never forget. His words were received with frantic never-ending cheers, rifles were waved about, busbies were thrown up in the air, and wild, I would almost call it savage, delight gleamed in all faces. 'Fall out; fetch your baggage, and fall in again as quickly as possible!' was the next order, and laughing, screaming, tumbling over each other, the men tore away to their quarters, and so eager were they that I really thought they would knock down the houses. Before twenty minutes had elapsed they had once more fallen in in full marching order, some of them still out of breath from running so fast. Every one of them had found time to put a flower or a green twig into his busby or his rifle-barrel; there they stood festively adorned

and full of enthusiasm; and it was an oppressive, almost painful thought, how very probable it was that all this joy would only too soon be turned into sorrow. One thing, however, was clear to me, that these men would fight as troops had rarely fought before.

CHAPTER IX.

BEFORE THE STORM.

The March of the Bulgarian army towards the seat of war—The advantageous position and favourable opinion of the Servian army—Diplomacy once more.

IT sounds so simple when one says, 'Prince Alexander ordered all his troops to be thrown on to the Servian frontier;' but anyone who was on the spot at the time saw such mountains of difficulties in the way of executing this order as were positively alarming in their magnitude.

Would the inexperienced Bulgarian head-quarter staff know how to carry out this gigantic change of front without getting everything into the worst state of disorder? Was there any guarantee that the Bulgarian army, which had to march along one single road, would find means of subsistence everywhere? Could one hope that all the ammunition which had been amassed in such quantities at the Turkish frontier would reach the spot where it was now wanted in time? Would the few battalions that were in position to the westward of Sofia be able to stop the enemy until the main army could arrive from Eastern Roumelia? All these ques-

tions were asked with an anxious heart, and the answers were not very confident. True, the Bulgarians had the control, for the transport of their troops, of the railway of Tirnova-Semenli (Turkish frontier) to Sarambey, but how very inadequate was the material for accomplishing it! When the Bulgarians, after the revolt of Philippopolis, very unnecessarily blew up the bridge at Mustapha Pasha, to cut off the railway communications with Turkey, the entire rolling stock left on the Roumelian portion of the line consisted of five engines and a proportionate number of carriages. These five engines, which, with fully laden trains, were only able to do about fifteen miles an hour, had been required to transport the entire Bulgarian army towards the Turkish frontier, had been kept running under steam for weeks without a break, and had in consequence suffered very considerably. It had been quite out of the question to give them a thorough repair, as all the workshops were at Adrianople, and according to the report of a railway engineer, there was no help for it but to be satisfied with patching them up temporarily with pieces of old stove-pipes. And now these wretched invalids were once more called upon to perform a truly gigantic task! A single accident to one of these dangerous engines would have delayed the whole movement of the troops for a length of time difficult to calculate, and it may be considered an extraordinary piece of luck that nothing of the sort happened.

The real difficulty, however, only began at Sarambey, for at that spot the railway came to an end, thanks to the culpable negligence of the Bulgarians themselves, and the troops had to march the rest of the way to Slivnitza, a distance of no less than eighty miles, including moreover the passage of the Balkans between Wetren and Ichtiman. On the other hand, the Servians had only to do about twenty-five miles from the frontier to Slivnitza, an advantage which it was feared would not be compensated for by the presence of defending troops between Slivnitza and the frontier, owing to their small numbers. In addition to this, the Bulgarian troops, in consequence of the scarcity of rolling stock, were only able to reach Sarambey, and consequently the seat of war, by slow degrees. The bad weather, moreover, that now set in, helped to make the defence of the country, which had been attacked so unexpectedly, almost hopelessly difficult.

I have never been able to find out what the dispositions were that had been made by the supreme command for that march from Sarambey to Slivnitza, and am beginning to doubt whether any more detailed instructions concerning such matters as length of marching stages or commissariat arrangements on the road were issued at all. On arriving at Sarambey, the troops found orders awaiting them to push on to the seat of war as quickly as possible, and it was left to the commanders of regiments and battalions both to carry

out that, and to see to the feeding of their men as best they could.

Now, however, the question arose, how to provide for the future wants of the army at Slivnitza, if ever a junction at that place were effected, and a similar system was employed in carrying out that important duty? Throughout the country carts were requisitioned, loaded, and the drivers simply told, 'Join the army.' And from all parts of the country these bullock-carts started off, mostly without any military escort or guides, and in an incredibly short space of time, they arrived at their destination. Needless to say, such a system would be quite impossible in a big war where huge masses of troops would be on the move, spread over large tracts of land; in this case also it had its drawbacks, and if these made themselves less felt, it was owing to the truly self-sacrificing zeal of the peasants, who did not mind any amount of exertion and privation, provided they carried out the instructions they had received. The Bulgarians have not escaped reproaches for this irregular transport service, and for the total absence of any properly organised commissariat department, and no doubt very justly, still the Bulgarians can put forward a pretty good excuse, which is aptly expressed by a German proverb, 'Where there is nothing, even the Emperor loses his rights.'

To put the matter shortly; the situation was exceedingly precarious for the Bulgarians; the Servians,

before they had even fired a single shot, possessed the immense advantage of being already in position on the frontier before the Bulgarians had even commenced to move into theirs, and that too under very difficult conditions. The Servians, accordingly, were able to impose their plan of operations on the Bulgarians without any fear of offensive movements on the part of the enemy; surprises of any kind were out of the question, and it was a clear, inevitable, certainty that they would be the victors at the commencement of the campaign. Their plan of attack could easily be deduced from the disposition of their troops. The Timok division, under General Leshjanin, was on the extreme left and threatened Widdin, the remaining four divisions, under the personal command of King Milan, had taken up positions along the line Pirot-Vlassina. From this distribution of forces it was quite evident that Sofia was the real point of attack, whilst Leshjanin's advance on Widdin had perhaps more a political than a military significance. The Servians had aspired to the possession of that town for a long time back, and if Leshjanin could only enter it, the Servians would be able to pose as *beati possidentes* at the ultimate peace negotiations. On the Bulgarian side this was fully understood, and in the firm conviction that the principal issue would be decided before Sofia, the main force was concentrated there, whilst only a single battalion of the line was despatched to Widdin, being later on

joined by several reserve battalions and finally by the Mahomedan volunteers, whose services, so spontaneously offered, had been accepted by the Prince.

Besides the above-mentioned strategical advantages, the Servian army seemed to possess others as compared to the Bulgarian, for whilst the latter had only been in existence a few years, and, moreover, had been deprived of all its superior officers at the moment of mobilising, the Servian army formed an organisation that had been perfected in the course of many years, possessed officers who had made modern and scientific studies, and who had also gained experience on the field of battle. In Europe the Servian army and its officers were spoken of with respect, all reports that came from Belgrad were favourable, and it is a fact that the Servian mobilisation was carried out with great order and regularity. I myself only touched at Belgrad on my very rapid journey eastward, but I confess that I also was well pleased with what little I saw of the Servian army. The men were very well turned out and moved in a soldier-like manner, the armament was quite equal to the Bulgarian, and if the artillery—for the most part old muzzle-loaders—was worse than the Bulgarian, this was fully compensated for by their possessing over four times the number of guns. As regards the strength of the five Servian divisions, one may certainly put it down at 12,000 for each division, making therefore a total of 60,000 men for the five, to which must be added about

10,000 or 15,000 men of the first reserves. On the day that war was declared, the Servians therefore had at least 70,000 men at the frontier, ready for immediate action, against whom the Bulgarians could only bring 15,000 or 16,000 men, covering a distance of 200 miles.

Meanwhile the diplomatic situation had assumed the following aspect. The Conference of ambassadors was on the point of summoning Prince Alexander, through Turkey, forthwith to retire from Eastern Roumelia with his army, and to hand over that province to a special envoy of the Turks, who was to assume the government provisionally. Before this summons could be carried out, the declaration of war on the part of Servia had achieved that which the Powers could never have brought about by peaceful means. Prince Alexander had left Eastern Roumelia with his army, and was able to inform the Sultan that he had of his own free will done that which had been so much desired by the Sublime Porte and the Powers. Perhaps in his anxiety not to do anything by halves, and to gratify the wishes of the Powers over and above what they had expressed, he took with him into Bulgaria nearly all the Roumelian troops as well, so that Turkish troops would now have been able to advance as far as Philippopolis without encountering any serious opposition; Turkish *troops*, let it be understood, for without troops and force of arms even now it would have been

impossible to restore the former state of things. As, however, the Sultan was still anxious for a peaceful and bloodless solution, the Turks remained passively at the frontier, and even those Powers who were at the first hostile to Bulgaria and her Prince assumed a quiet and expectant attitude, as they were firmly convinced that the Servians would soon drive out of the Bulgarians all ideas of ever becoming a great Power. At the same time some, in their way very curious, negotiations took place between Turkey and the belligerents. Early in November, when the concentration of the Servian troops on the Bulgarian frontier had assumed a suspicious aspect, the Grand Vizier had presented a note at Belgrad to the effect that Turkey would not tolerate an attack upon Bulgaria, as it formed an integral part of the Ottoman Empire, and would, if necessary, repel the same by force of arms.

This note was officially communicated to the Bulgarian Government, and although the latter never counted upon any real assistance from Turkey, it was very natural that Prince Alexander, on receiving the declaration of war, should have requested the Grand Vizier to redeem his promise. Making a promise and carrying it out is, however, not always the same thing even with the Turks, and as, at the same time, a telegram from the Servian Government had been received by the Sublime Porte, in which any intention of violating Turkish rights was distinctly disclaimed, the Grand

Vizier merely answered Prince Alexander, that Turkey, before giving any assistance, was bound to make an inquiry as to which of the two parties had really begun the war. Servia, on the other hand, was informed in reply that the Sublime Porte had much satisfaction in taking cognisance of her declaration about not violating Turkish rights,—in other words, Turkey did nothing!

The result of this was a rather droll situation, presenting all sorts of new aspects of international law. On one side Turkey permitted Bulgaria, '*partie intégrante de l'Empire Ottoman*,' to be invaded by the forces of a foreign Power; on the other, she was unwilling to prevent Turkish troops—for that is what the Roumeliots were by right—from taking part in the fight against Servia, without the latter being able to raise any objections; and finally we must bear in mind that the Powers who had been so terribly exasperated at the violation of the Berlin Treaty by the Roumelian revolt, now had hardly a word of mild reproof for Servia, who was on the point of violating the same treaty, just as the Bulgarians had done. It would be childish to suppose that the victorious Servians, after having brought the Bulgarian union to nought, would have quietly gone home, perhaps even contenting themselves with a war-indemnity in money. Everybody, however, as well as the Powers, knew that Servia was coveting the districts on the Bulgarian frontier, and therefore was also planning and intending to carry out a violation of

the Berlin Treaty; a prospect which, however, was not calculated greatly to excite the Powers: '*si duo faciunt idem, non est idem!*'

There is a saying that the firing of guns has the same effect of clearing the political atmosphere as a thunderstorm has on the atmosphere in general. However that may be, drastic measures were required to clear up this mass of intricate and entangled situations, made up of inconceivable blunders and lying hypocrisy. We shall see how the guns accomplished their task!

CHAPTER X.

THE PRELUDE.

Servian victories and bulletins—Public opinion—Prince Alexander on the prospects of the war—To Slivnitza!

'THE king's troops have crossed the Bulgarian frontier and thrown back the Bulgarian outposts at every point. At 5 o'clock Zaribrod was occupied.—The headquarters are at Zaribrod. The Bulgarians have evacuated the positions at Dragoman on being attacked by our troops. —The earthworks at Trn have been carried by assault, the enemy has been completely routed and Trn occupied. We have taken many prisoners. An entire Bulgarian battalion laid down its arms.—General Leshjanin has fought a battle between Kulah and Widdin. The Bulgarians, defeated and scattered, left their killed and wounded on the battlefield. We took 1000 prisoners. A battalion of Bulgarian volunteers laid down its arms. —The Bulgarian troops at Widdin may be considered completely scattered and annihilated. — The king's troops continue their advance all along the line.'

These bulletins of victory were issued broadcast by the Servians at a time when Prince Alexander was

still at Sofia and the greater part of his troops still in Eastern Roumelia. And they were followed by others no less confident of victory; the fall of Widdin was only a question of hours, in fact the town was in all probability already in the hands of the Servians; on November 19 King Milan would make his entry into Sofia and there dictate the terms of peace. Promotions and decorations were showered upon the victors of the these first 'battles.'

Now let us see what really was the truth about all these sanguinary battles. Firstly, taking the fights near Trn, Vrazza, and Bresnik, which were the most serious of all these actions. On the Bulgarian side the force consisted of two line-battalions, which were reinforced by reserves and volunteers, so that one may assume their total strength to have been 4,000 or 5,000 men. Besides this there was a Krupp battery of eight guns. Against this insignificant and, moreover, considerably scattered little band, the entire Morava and Drina divisions were operating, supported by a very numerous artillery. Nevertheless the Bulgarians held out and forced the Servians to bring the whole of their forces into action, then retired slowly, retarding the enemy's advance so long that he was unable to reach Bresnik before November 18. The total loss of the Bulgarians in all these engagements can be put down at 300 or 400 killed and wounded, and about 400 prisoners. What was worse was the loss of the Krupp battery,

which, having stuck in the mountains, had to be abandoned after spiking the guns. That was a heavy blow for the Bulgarian army, which, as it was, only possessed very few guns.

Along the second line of invasion—the Zaribrod-Sofia road—the Servians encountered still less resistance, as Zaribrod was only garrisoned by a battalion of volunteers and a squadron of cavalry, composed in part of regulars, in part of irregular troops, under the command of Lieutenant Slaweikoff. This mere handful, so far from beating a hasty retreat at the approach of two whole divisions—the Shumadja and Danube divisions—held out so stubbornly that the Servians were only able to occupy Zaribrod at five o'clock in the afternoon. (Slaweikoff himself told me later on that the Servians had expended about one shell for each of his men before he retired on the Dragoman pass.) Consequently the Servians were only able to attack the pass on November 15, and here again the defence was only made with a view of delaying the enemy as long as possible, as the Bulgarians, who had been thrown back at Zaribrod, had only been reinforced by two battalions and two batteries. A very violent cannonade took place, carried on with great waste of ammunition, especially on the part of the Servians, without, however, succeeding in dislodging the Bulgarians. It was only when towards evening the news reached the Bulgarian commander that the enemy, ten times superior in numbers,

was preparing to turn the position, that he resolved to give up the pass during the night and to retire on Slivnitza, so that the Servians could only reach the plain of Slivnitza across the Dragoman on the morning of the 16th.

It was much the same with the third column of the invading army, the Timok division under General Leshjanin. His great 'battle' between Kulah and Widdin consisted of nothing more than the driving back of a few battalions of reserves and detachments of volunteers. Neither the 1,500 men of line troops nor the Turkish volunteer battalions had arrived at that time, and the commandant of Widdin, Captain Usunoff, must have been glad that this rabble in the shape of troops had detained Leshjanin so long that when he finally appeared before Widdin the regulars and Turks were ready to defend the fortress.

The great Servian victories, brought down to their proper dimensions, therefore amount to the fact that the Servians had certainly succeeded in gaining ground to a not inconsiderable extent with each of their advancing columns, which of course was bound to have an excellent moral effect on their troops. If it had only approximately equalled the self-glorification and boastfulness of the Servian headquarter staff, the Bulgarians would have been lost. So far, however, the situation was simply this, that the Servians had only now reached the point where the Bulgarians were able to offer

any real resistance. Widdin, Bresnik, and, above all, Slivnitza, these were the places where these Eastern Piedmontese were to prove their qualification for the leadership in the Balkans.

The impression produced in Europe by the Servian war declaration, and by her immediately assuming the offensive so successfully, was touchingly unanimous; all the world was convinced that Bulgaria and Prince Alexander were lost, and it cannot be denied that the state of affairs was very critical. The Prince's enemies were triumphant, and spoke with satisfaction of the justice and wise disposition of fate, which would not permit such a wicked deed as the violation of the Berlin Treaty to remain unatoned. Soon Prince Alexander would be at leisure to reflect, far from Sofia, upon the iniquity of instigating revolutions, and especially so without the Czar's permission. Ah yes, every misdeed is avenged on this earth! That the Prince had no share in bringing about this revolution of course made no difference in the matter. And now the Russian party, which had remained silent up to now, lifted up its voice and spoke to the people: 'You see now how far this child of evil destiny has brought you; you see now what comes of turning away from Russia!' Others again sincerely pitied the chivalrous and amiable Prince whom an unfortunate combination of circumstances would now hurl from his throne, not without much ado, but presumably without much glory. And with others again

the German national feeling revolted at the thought that, in the person of Prince Alexander, Germany and the German army were to receive a slap in the face.

The one who remained the most calm and collected was the one most affected by it all, Prince Alexander. He had left Philippopolis amidst the most enthusiastic manifestations of the populace, his journey to Sofia had been a triumphal progress, at Sofia he had been received with acclamations, and here he set to work. It was a case of organising the defences of the country, to give unity to the military operations, to inspire the country with confidence. It required deeds, not words, to prove that Bulgaria's destinies were in firm and determined hands. And thus the Prince's manifesto to the army was in the following pithy words:—

'Our Servian brothers have declared war against us; instead of helping us they want to ruin our country. Soldiers! show that you are brave; defend your wives and your homes. Pursue the enemy who attacks us in so cowardly and treacherous a manner unto complete annihilation. God grant us the victory!'

What the Prince's views were as to the issue of the war is best shown by the following remarks made on November 16 to one of his intimates: 'I judge the situation,' he said, 'very calmly and dispassionately. Both countries, Bulgaria and Servia, are about of a size, and are therefore able to make about the same efforts. I know the Servian and the Bulgarian armies, however,

and know that mine is the better of the two. If therefore I can manage, and the Servians give me time to bring my whole army, or even the greater portion of it, against them, I shall beat them. If not—then everything is lost.'

Contrary to his original intention, the Prince had remained at Sofia the 15th and even the forenoon of the 16th, as at that time it was hardly possible to say where his presence would be needed most. Moreover, the scene of action could always be reached in a few hours, whether the main attack took place on the Pernik-Sofia or Dragoman-Sofia line. It was only by midday on the 16th that the news from the front made it quite clear that the Servian main force was before Slivnitza, and that the issue would be fought out there. As soon as I heard this I made up my mind to start for Slivnitza. I had employed my short stay at Sofia to fit myself out for the campaign. A carriage and eight horses which could be used both for riding and driving were soon procured, driver and servants hired, provisions laid in, and I was ready for a start!

Though the situation was hardly calculated to make one feel cheerful, yet I was elated at the idea of being at last on *terra firma*, in other words, after having disposed of all the formalities, of being actually on the road to the scene of action with the assurance of being able to follow the impending operations as an eye-witness. Of the drive to Slivnitza there is nothing much

to be said, and but for an occasional cart with wounded from the fights in the Dragoman, there was nothing to remind one of the immediate vicinity of a battlefield. Several times I pulled up to try if I could hear any firing of guns, but not a sound disturbed the general calm. 'Very odd,' I said to myself; 'the Servians reached Dragoman very early this morning, from there it is only a very short bit on to Slivnitza; why do they remain inactive?' Not that I was sorry for it, for I knew well that every such day wasted by the Servians meant a clear gain of 5,000 bayonets for the defenders of Slivnitza, who stood in sore need of reinforcements.

Arrived at Slivnitza, I first of all looked about for a house where I could put up with my men and horses, then I had two horses saddled and rode off with my servant towards the entrenched positions which were situated about two miles beyond the village. Some soldiers directed me towards a small wood on the backward slope of the heights, where I should find the headquarters of Major Gutscheff, the officer commanding the position. On learning there that Gutscheff had ridden out to the lines with his staff to have a last look at the batteries before dark, I followed at once in the direction indicated, coming across deep shelter trenches in every direction, but without being able to form any correct estimate of the general situation, owing to darkness setting in. Finally I came across Gutscheff, introduced myself, handed him my credentials, was

very amiably received, and heard that the Servians had employed the day in resting after the fighting of the two preceding ones. Whilst we were still discussing this we heard loud 'hurrahs' coming from the right. That could only be the Prince, and away we went to meet him, full gallop, over the frozen ruts and the rocky ground, that ought by rights to have given us many a spill. The 'hurrahs' had indeed been caused by the arrival of the Prince, who on noticing the approach of the staff, galloped out to meet us and heard Gutscheff's report of what had occurred and of the dispositions that had been taken. The Prince expressed himself as completely satisfied with everything, but now came the weighty question, 'What have you actually got here?'—'9 battalions, 32 guns, and about 2,000 reserves and volunteers.'—'And over there?'—'I take it, the Servians must be 25,000 to 30,000 strong.' The answer was not very reassuring, especially if one considered the great extent of the Bulgarian lines. At the best the Servians were double as strong as we, and that was including the not very valuable reserves and volunteers. No reinforcements could be expected before the evening of the following day, whilst a serious attack was certain for to-morrow, as the Servians could not possibly remain passive any longer.

Slowly we rode back to Slivnitza, where the Prince had established his headquarters in a 'Khan' or wayside

inn, and as I lay down for the night on my hard couch—there could be no question of mattrass or pillow—I thought of those poor soldiers who must have been so wretchedly cold out on the heights, and many of whom would not be there to-morrow evening.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BATTLE OF SLIVNITZA.

The First Day.

If the weather had been hard and cheerless the evening before, the outlook on the morning of November 17 was simply hopeless. As I rode up the heights at eight o'clock, I was met by an icy cold wind and a few single drops of rain, which soon turned into snow and sleet, covering the ground in a short space of time with a moist white pall. My first thought was, how are the unfortunate troops to get through a third day, lying in the wet and muddy trenches, without shelter of any kind? Now that snow and rain were added, it seemed quite impossible. And the higher I got the more cutting and icy the wind became, so that I was hardly able to open my eyes. I first made for Gutscheff's headquarters, consisting of a small hut that usually served as a place of refuge for the shepherds, or perhaps for their flocks, a point which was never quite clear to me. The 'Gutscheff Palace,' however, as it was called, possessed one quality which raised it very high in the general esti-

mation; it was the only habitation in the entire extent of the position, and only a few specially-favoured ones were allowed to warm their numbed extremities there for a few minutes. Close by was a small shed, where the field telegraph was installed, whilst in the palace itself Gutscheff and his staff were housed. As I arrived they were sitting outside the door, warming hands and feet at a very scanty fire. 'What's the news?' 'None; we are expecting the attack every moment.' 'And how do the troops stand this dreadful weather?' 'Oh, our soldiers are very hardened and can stand an awful lot. Still this can't go on much longer.' What surprised me very much was the calm, I might almost say the indifference, that prevailed in this headquarter-staff. One could easily have understood and forgiven a certain amount of excitement in these young officers, placed in such unaccustomed positions, but they remained as imperturbable as if it were simply a case of autumn manœuvres; especially Gutscheff himself, a tall, finely-built man, with a thick black beard and pleasant features. He may have been thirty-two or thirty-four years of age; a Bulgarian by birth, he had entered the Russian army, had taken part in the Russo-Turkish War as a lieutenant, and then joined the Roumelian militia, from which he afterwards exchanged into the Bulgarian army. When the Russian officers left the army, Prince Alexander promoted him to be major, and later on gave him the command of all the troops for the protection of

Sofia. It was from him, who, next to Prince Alexander, has the greatest claim to be called 'the victor of Slivnitza,' that I heard that Prince Alexander had already ridden out to join his suite at the lines, whither I followed him at once.

Before describing the commencement of the action, a word about the position itself might be in place. It had been chosen by the Prince himself after a careful inspection of the whole ground, and then fortified by the Bulgarian engineers. It extended almost in a straight line north and south, to the length of nearly three miles. Situated about two miles outside the village of Slivnitza, it was divided by the Slivnitza-Dragoman road, so that about one-fourth lay to the right of it and three-fourths to the left. In front of the position there was a broad and flat hollow, with the high-road running through it, the mountains coming up to the latter steep and pretty near on the right, whilst the ground on the left rose only gradually, and at a distance of three to four miles. From the left extremity of the lines up to the high-road, shelter trenches had been dug, strongly profiled throughout, and frequently arranged in three or four tiers, and also three very strong emplacements for artillery constructed, each fitted with embrasures for eight guns. In rear of the left-hand one of these batteries there was a powerful redoubt, which commanded the batteries and trenches in front of it, and was at the same time able to cover the left flank

very effectively. From the left extreme of the position a series of trenches had been laid out, bent back at an angle. On the other side of the high-road a piece of rising ground had been used to erect a redoubt, in front of which again there were lines of trenches up to the foot of the mountains. The extreme right wing of the Bulgarians was placed in the mountains themselves, without any other cover than that offered by the nature of the ground.

After I had made an inspection of the entire position, commencing with the left flank, I arrived at the firm conviction that the portion between the left wing battery and the high-road could not possibly be taken, provided it was fully manned, and that even with an insufficient garrison it was almost impregnable. On that portion, however, of the left wing which was bent back, our real left extreme, where there was nothing besides a handful of reserves and volunteers, the outlook was bad. This was our vulnerable point, and everything depended on the enemy not finding it out. As regards our right wing (to the right of the high-road), that part of the position could also be considered well protected; still, the situation would have become very critical if the Servians had forced back the troops stationed in the mountains and had seized the heights to the right of the high-road, which, of course, commanded the fortified lines. Therefore it was not only necessary to maintain the position in the mountains, but, if possible, to take

ground forward. This would serve a double purpose; the right flank was made all the more sure, and besides there was the hope—this being the principal reason—that by so doing the enemy's attention would be taken off the left flank. According to this plan the dispositions for the day had been made.

About half-past nine I met Prince Alexander with his staff, not far from Gutscheff's headquarters, carefully watching the proceedings on the right wing, where the engagement was being developed gradually. The weather was awful, and a fog which was coming on prevented one from making out clearly how the fighting was progressing, so that, everything being quiet in front, Prince Alexander decided to ride towards the right wing himself. We had soon crossed the high-road and ridden into the mountains, which rise in wild confusion between the road and the village of Malo Malovo. The mountain range there is throughout of irregular formation; one hill top is succeeded by another, sometimes separated by deep ravines, which run north and south here, east and west there. The mountains are almost entirely bare, and strewed everywhere with large loose boulders, so that the ascent would have been highly dangerous with any but Bulgarian horses, which are accustomed to mountains and wonderfully sure-footed. If it was difficult enough at any time to find one's way in that jumble of hills and dales, it was doubly so to-day, with a dense fog that precluded anything like a distant view.

However, we received a report about the state of the action from which I gleaned the following. Very early in the morning Captain Bendereff, who was in command of the right wing, received information that the Servians were preparing some very extensive movement, upon which he instantly gave orders to attack. Two battalions advanced against a height occupied by the Servians, and having forced back the leading troops, tried to continue their advance. At that very moment we came up in the rear of the two battalions, and could see at once, by the terrific fire in which the Servian artillery was beginning to join, that our battalions were being met by a very strong resistance. It was the first time that Prince Alexander saw his Bulgarian troops under fire, and one may well imagine with what suspense he watched the movements of these battalions thrown out in skirmishing order. As soon as we had got a little nearer, we could not disguise the fact from ourselves that the advance, for a time at least, was at an end, that the two battalions were face to face with very superior Servian forces, and that the artillery fire was beginning to make itself very unpleasantly felt in their ranks. Salvos of artillery were mingling with the rolling musketry fire, and the Bulgarian skirmishers were beginning to waver. The situation was assuming a critical aspect, for if the Servians drove us out of the mountains, they could turn Slivnitza. That, as well as anything like a pronounced retrograde movement, had

to be avoided at all costs on account of its moral effect, and so Prince Alexander gave Captain Bendereff leave to bring up the main reserve, the troops specially saved up for a case of extreme emergency. The main reserve — it sounds almost ludicrous to say so — consisted only of two battalions of the Danube regiment. Half an hour had elapsed since their orders had been sent off, when of a sudden the Servian fire redoubled and seemed to approach rapidly. For two minutes violent firing from the Bulgarians crackled in reply, then our skirmishers rose and ran back at full speed. Behind them the Servian line of fire came in sight, pouring a perfect hail of bullets over the flying enemies. All this had happened so quickly that we even found the Servians unpleasantly near to us, and began to hear the whistle of their bullets for the first time.

To anyone superstitiously inclined, it might have appeared as an ill omen that the first engagement in the Prince's presence had begun so unfavourably; luckily, however, the Servians were unable to follow up their advantage with any rapidity, as Bendereff succeeded in arresting their progress by taking them in the flank with a third battalion. The retreating troops could now be rallied again, and the regular advance in skirmishing order began anew, but without any of the former violent firing. If up to then, being pretty well in the midst of the action, we had not given much attention to anything going on at our centre, we could

now no longer close our ears to the sound of guns which came from that direction. Uninterruptedly the musketry fire rolled on, and the salvos of artillery following each other in rapid succession showed that a general action was being fought. And in fact, Gutscheff at that moment had to bear the brunt of the Servians' main attack.

Under these circumstances, and as the fighting on our flank had slackened, the Prince decided to return to the centre, leaving the command of the right wing to Captain Bendereff. And so we travelled back the same way we had come, through the same stony desert. As we left the mountains we met the two battalions of the Danube regiment, and were therefore able to take leave of the right flank with more reassurance. As we were not to return there again, the continuation of the action on that part of the battlefield may here be described at once. As soon as the two battalions of the Danube regiment had joined Bendereff, he ordered the positions just seized by the Servians to be carried by assault. The moment when the Danube regiment formed for attack at the foot of the heights held by the Servians remains a memorable one in Bulgarian history, for it was the commencement of that wild, relentless onslaught under which the Servian army was eventually to break down. Without firing a single shot, with colours flying and drums beating, they rushed up the hill, a hill that it would have been no mean performance to have climbed

in the quiet times of peace. It was here that the Servians first heard the strains of the national air 'Djumi-Maritza,' which were alone sufficient, later on, to put them to flight. Under the most violent Servian fire, the hill was climbed—a final rush, and the Servians were driven out of their positions at the point of the bayonet, and thrown down the other side. No sooner had the Bulgarian battalions reached the top of the hill, than they disappeared behind it. There was a long pause . . . then from a distance was heard once more the 'Djumi-Maritza;' desperate firing; the loud hurrahs of the storming Bulgarians, and the second position was taken. There was no doubt the two battalions were on the point of bolting, but in the right direction! Yet a third height had been stormed in the same way before Bendereff managed to come up and arrest the attacking columns. And it was high time, for any further advance would have lengthened out our position on the right flank to such an extent that our weak forces would have been insufficient to man it properly. If our strategical position had been considerably strengthened by these fights, the moral effect produced by them was still greater: for the first time the Bulgarians had seen the backs of the Servians, and had beaten them thoroughly with bayonet and butt! The remainder of the day was utilised by Bendereff in taking the village of Malo Malovo, and in preparing himself there for the continuation of the fight.

When the Prince's staff reached the centre the fire was continuing unabated, but the fog was so dense that hardly anything could be seen. It was evident, however, that the Servians were advancing with all their forces against our central position, and we were not dissatisfied that they had selected precisely this point of attack. Here we met the Prince's brother who had just arrived from Sofia, Prince Francis Joseph of Battenberg, late lieutenant in the Prussian foot-guards, wearing to-day for the first time the uniform of the Bulgarian cavalry. With him had arrived the comptroller of Prince Alexander's household, now acting as his principal aide-de-camp, Lieutenant-Colonel von Riedesel, and Mr. Menges, the private secretary, so that the Prince's staff was complete. Gutscheff informed us that our troops were holding out pluckily all along the line, and that there was no indication of any movement towards our left flank. Hoping to get a better view of the whole from higher ground, the Prince rode off to the redoubt on the left wing, and indeed one could see rather better from there. About half a mile in front of the redoubt a battery commanded by Captain Iwanoff was in position, against which the enemy's artillery was mainly directing its fire. Hundreds of Servian shell were sent there, but the greater part went beyond their mark and burst quite harmlessly between the battery and our redoubt. The battery replied steadily, and towards two o'clock its fire had become so rapid that the Prince

sent his aide-de-camp Uwalieff to warn Captain Iwanoff to save up his ammunition as much as possible and not to throw away any shot. This warning was only too well justified, for our artillery ammunition was very scarce indeed, and it was inevitable that with such a fire our store would quickly be exhausted. Soon, however, we saw that Iwanoff had good cause for his rapid fire, for before long the Servian bullets reached even our redoubt. The Servian infantry must therefore have come pretty close to the battery. Luckily the fire of our artillery and infantry managed to bring them up. A few rifts in the fog enabled us to see that our infantry was holding out splendidly, though the beautifully arranged tiers of trenches were not of much use, from the very simple and to us very sad reason, that we had hardly enough soldiers to man the lower line of trenches alone. We had not a single man in reserve, and the higher tiers of trenches and our fine redoubt were only too much like 'Potemkin's villages.'

At about half-past three the fire of the Servians began to slacken, and there was a general impression that no real attack would take place that day. The Servians had probably suffered heavy losses merely in their advance, and had, moreover, satisfied themselves on coming nearer that an attack against the front of the positions so stubbornly defended could not be undertaken with any chance of success. They had certainly come near enough, for at one time they advanced to within 400

yards of Iwanoff's battery. Towards evening this battery, as was feared, had actually fired away all its ammunition, and had to be replaced in great haste by another. Until six o'clock the firing continued with slight pauses along the entire line, and it only died away towards nightfall. The first day's fight was over.

What were its results? As a material advantage must be put down the improvement of the position on the right flank, but still more the gain in time. Most important of all, however, was the moral effect, for here the Bulgarian officers, as well as the men, had shown for the first time that they could be victorious. Several officers, like Gutscheff and Bendereff, had proved that they were able to lead larger bodies of troops, even without any previous practice; the artillery, under its energetic and untiring chief, Captain Panoff, had done admirable work. The troops had been tough and persevering in the defence, brave, even foolhardy in the attack, and a strong tie had bound together the army and the Prince, who had been everywhere in the midst of his men, leading and inciting them, frequently exposing his person more than a commander-in-chief ought to do. Under ordinary conditions this would be reprehensible; here, however, there were exceptional conditions, for it was a case of encouraging troops in an apparently desperate position to make extraordinary efforts, and there is nothing that has such an effect as the example of the supreme commander, who must not hesitate in desperate

moments to risk everything, even his life. How his soldiers appreciated this was proved by their enthusiastic cheers, their never-ending demonstrations, when the Prince, before returning to Slivnitza, once more rode down the lines.

The Second Day.

The weather was very bad all through November 17, and as it did not mend towards evening, there was some anxiety about the soldiers who were exposed to the inclemency of the weather. They must have had a bad night of it out on the heights. At the headquarters too there was not much rest, for it was felt that after all this had only been the commencement, and that the worst was still to come. The telegraph was at work all night, and all the troops who were then on the road between Sarambey and Slivnitza were ordered to march for dear life. It was only late at night that our own losses could be ascertained, and the reports of the different detachment commanders showed a total of about 600 killed and wounded. It was impossible to arrive at any accurate estimate of the Servian losses, but it was believed that they must have amounted to 1,200 or 1,500 men, an assumption which was afterwards pretty well borne out by the depositions of the prisoners.

The expectation that the Servians would attempt to avenge their defeat of the previous day as early as

possible was realised, for as early as half-past seven a tremendous cannonade suddenly opened, and, moreover, against our left flank. The Servians must have made up their minds during the night that there was nothing to be done against our front; perhaps too they had meanwhile discovered that our left flank had been as good as unprotected all yesterday; in short, their attack was directed against that part of our position. It was, however, too late now, for overnight our first reinforcements had arrived: four battalions of the Breslaff regiment and an Eastern Roumelian battalion. When the latter had reached Sofia under the command of Captain Kowatscheff, the men were so dead beat that it was out of the question to continue the march. At Sofia, however, it was well known how small was the number of defenders at Slivnitza, and that every additional company was of the very highest importance; it was therefore quickly decided to send the battalion on to the front on horseback. Taking the horses of a cavalry regiment in course of formation at Sofia, two Roumeliots were put on each animal, and the entire battalion just arrived in the nick of time to take part in the general action. If any one incident can prove how near a thing it was for us, this will, and it proves besides what an unpardonable mistake the Servians made when on November 16 they gave their troops a day's rest instead of instantly attacking Slivnitza with all their strength. Even on its own account, this

transporting of infantry on horseback is interesting enough, especially so as the same horses were to be used for a similar purpose again later on. For all that, I do not believe that this means of transport, which anyhow can only be taken into consideration for very extreme emergencies, could ever be employed in any other country but Bulgaria, where every inhabitant is accustomed to riding from his earliest days.

The Servians, who perhaps had counted upon an easy success, met with a determined resistance, for at daybreak the left flank, our weak spot, was already occupied by the fresh troops. Where yesterday we had nothing, to-day there stood 5,000 men, and when an entire Servian division rapidly came into action against that position, they soon found this out and were obliged to moderate the advance. A regular but very violent long-range fire was developed on both sides, in which two Bulgarian batteries which had been brought up in all haste soon joined. The Prince and Gutscheff, who had both proceeded to the left flank, directed the engagement, and on this occasion Prince Alexander repeatedly got into a hot fire whilst encouraging and inciting his troops. At first the Servians' superior forces gained ground, and the Bulgarian advanced troops slightly recoiled. As soon, however, as the Servians, who had to advance in the open, came within effective range of the Bulgarian trenches, they suffered heavy losses, and some of their leading columns were literally mown

down by the Bulgarian volleys. Once more the infantry fire was resumed on both sides, and this time under favourable conditions for the Bulgarians and Roumelians, who were under perfect cover. After the engagement had lasted for two hours in this way, the Servian commander, convinced of the uselessness of further attempts, gave the signal to retire, which was done under deadly fire from the Bulgarians. Several battalions, who were for dashing after the Servians with bayonets fixed, were only kept back with difficulty, and a regular pursuit did not take place. There would certainly have been no object in doing so, as the positions which the Bulgarians could have taken were less advantageous than those they occupied, and as, moreover, the time for a general attack had not yet arrived. However, the danger to the left wing seemed to be averted for the moment, and Prince Alexander was able to return to the main position, where up to now everything had been quiet.

The success on the left flank had not been achieved without considerable losses. The Roumelian battalion alone had lost over 100 men, and the Breslaff regiment had 300 hors-de-combat. The Servian losses, which on this occasion could be pretty accurately observed, must have amounted to 800 or 1,000 men.

On our way back to the main position we passed several encampments where men were lying about groaning. At first we thought that they were wounded, but we soon found out that they were suffering from

internal inflammations. And no wonder, if one remembers the three days' bivouac in rain and slush, when besides the men were mostly without warm food; if anything, it was a wonder that these cases of sickness were so few in number. I believe that this favourable result was principally due to the fact that the soldiers were fighting incessantly on November 17, and were therefore kept in constant physical exertion and, what is still more important, in moral tension. If the troops at Slivnitza had remained in the same inactivity on the 17th and 18th as on the 16th, I do not know what would have happened.

Notwithstanding the success on the left flank, Prince Alexander's brow did not clear; on reaching the 'Gutscheff Palace' I found out the reason. At one o'clock in the night Gutscheff had come to the Prince at Slivnitza, and had brought him a very awkward, and indeed alarming piece of news. Bendereff's battalions, who had fought in the mountains until night, had got mixed, had got lost—in short, close on 3,000 men were missing and no one knew exactly what had become of them. Could it be assumed that these troops, who had only just fought so splendidly, had lost all moral courage after that one exertion and had simply cut and run? Could such an unheard-of thing have occurred as victorious troops taking to flight after having gained such victories? No one could or would believe such a thing, yet on the other hand the fact remained that the

troops on the right flank, through the disappearance of 3,000 men, had been placed nearly hors-de-combat on the early morning of November 18. It was therefore very evident why such low spirits reigned at head-quarters, and why all listened anxiously in the direction of the right flank, where up to now all had been quiet, but where a serious attack might be expected any moment. Luckily the Servians on this occasion once more remained true to their customs, showed no signs of being in haste, and seemed in fact to have altogether given up the intention of attacking our right wing. Nevertheless it was a great relief when about midday Bendereff's report came in, stating that the missing troops had for the most part reappeared, and that he was now ready on his part to renew the attack. At the same time we received an explanation of the disappearance of the troops; they had lost their way in the mountains, and in the pitch-dark night had been unable to find their own corps, whilst they in their turn had not been found by the people who were to bring them their food from Slivnitza. The very small number of officers, and the utter impossibility for the commanders of larger detachments to exercise proper supervision over their troops, had resulted in a general jumble, and the men had started back on their own account to Slivnitza and the adjoining villages in search of food. With break of day they tried to find their positions again, and came trooping into the mountains in crowds.

All this was of course the very opposite of that military order so much to be desired, but it had at least dispersed the worst fears, lest our troops had become demoralised through the fighting. It shows besides to what dangers an army is exposed which is so very insufficiently provided with officers and non-commissioned officers as was the Bulgarian. At this point a circumstance should be mentioned, that on the one hand exposes a great want in the Bulgarian military system, but that on the other is calculated to place the good quality of the Bulgarian troops in the most favourable light. There was a total absence of anything even faintly resembling a military police, and it would therefore have been a very easy matter for individual soldiers to keep away from the fighting. Such stragglers would have had no supervision to fear, and it is not saying too much if I maintain that only those men fought who really felt inclined to do so of their own free will. That, notwithstanding this, all of them were only animated by the one desire to get to the front, that even men who were sick or utterly exhausted could only with difficulty be prevented from dragging themselves after their battalions instead of taking an hour's rest, that stragglers, in fact, were almost unknown—surely all this shows a sense of duty and a degree of devotion which makes the Bulgarian soldier worthy of the fullest sympathy.

Towards one o'clock we were disturbed at our lunch

by the sound of guns firing at our front, and we renounced the enjoyment of our not particularly sumptuous feast in favour of a good position in the battery which was established about five hundred yards in front of Gutscheff's headquarters. Immediately on arriving there we saw that the Servians were once more making for our central position, for several very long, though somewhat thin lines of skirmishers were advancing towards us to the right of the high-road, whilst Servian artillery came into action against us as well. The fire of the Bulgarian batteries was now principally directed against the latter, and we soon obtained the plainest proof of the superiority of our Krupps over the antiquated Servian guns, which were forced to retire after quite a short struggle, probably not without considerable losses, whilst their projectiles were not even able to reach our batteries. Meanwhile the Servian skirmishers, without, however, having been reinforced, were steadily advancing, and on the flat grassy plain, with a good glass, every individual man could easily be made out. They thus presented an excellent target for our batteries, which at once began throwing shell into them. Prince Alexander had mounted the breastwork of the battery, and was watching from there the further development of the Servian advance, which from the first had been quite incomprehensible to us. Seriously to attack our position with such a weak line of skirmishers would have been sheer madness; it could not be meant as a

diversion, for at that time no operations had been undertaken against any other part of our position from which it might have been desirable to avert our attention, and it could not be with the object of reconnoitring, as the Servians could see quite plainly what they had in front of them. No other assumption was therefore possible, than that they had felt the want of letting a few dozen of their men be shot, in which they certainly succeeded admirably. After a few trial shots to ascertain the exact range, our shell pitched with terrible accuracy, and nearly every one knocked over one or more Servians. War makes one hard and callous, and every hit was greeted with exclamations of delight by people who at other times were not at all inclined that way. And all the time we were looking on at this human slaughter from our battery as from the box of a theatre! Suddenly the Prince dropped his glass and jumped off the breastwork. 'I cannot look on this any longer,' he cried; 'it is a shame that I am forced to let these unfortunate men be shot down—and why? for the sake of a policy as stupid as it is mean!' I would that King Milan, and his counsellors who urged him to this war, could have heard these truly humane words of the very Prince whom they wished to destroy—and that they had felt some remorse at them.

The Servian soldiers stood up to our shell with an amount of pluck which deserves all praise; but a further advance was of course impossible, and after a time

the Servian leaders also seemed to see how utterly useless their enterprise was, for they withdrew their men out of reach of our guns.

The Bulgarians had so many dozen shell, the Servians so many soldiers, the less, and beyond that the affair had not had any object. This ended the operations on our front for that day, and the second half of the afternoon and the evening were exclusively taken up by our right wing. When Captain Bendereff, who commanded at that point, observed the Servians advancing towards our centre, he ordered his brigade to attack at once, so as to support the defence of the main position as well as to gain as much ground as possible with the right wing. Two battalions advanced in line and energetically attacked the Servian position, whilst a third battalion coming from Malo Malovo at the same time pressed the enemy's flank, thus making the attack a completely turning one. Repeated attacks were made at the point of the bayonet, which the Servians were unable to resist in a single case. At four o'clock Prince Alexander sent orders to seize a very formidable height, where it was feared the Servians might place a battery during the night and so gain a dangerous 'point d'appui.' This attack was carried out from the north and east by Bendereff's battalions, whilst another battalion advanced in the meanwhile from the central position along the high-road, forcing the Servians slowly back into the plain. During this part of the engagement there was an excellent oppor-

tunity of comparing the firing of both armies. The Bulgarians, no doubt, fired rather more rapidly than was actually necessary, but what was that in comparison to the perfectly mad fire which the Servians kept up for over an hour against the Bulgarian skirmishers! The rolling of the musketry never ceased for half a minute, and if the Bulgarian losses had been in proportion to the Servian expenditure of ammunition, there would have been but few of the attacking force left. But the Servian fire was as badly aimed as it was rapid, and the losses of the Bulgarians, who were steadily advancing, were only slight. Towards half-past five the wind from the mountain top, which was quite enveloped in fog, brought us the strains of 'Djumi-Maritza,'—we could see nothing at all—and soon after the sound of receding musketry fire told us that this height also had been taken by the Bulgarians. Meanwhile the night set in, and we only saw the uninterrupted flashes of fire from the trenches in the plain, which was prolonged for some time until it gradually died away.

We thought that this would end our day's work, and the Prince's staff rode slowly back to Slivnitza, everywhere enthusiastically cheered by the troops. There was, however, yet a small surprise in store for us. I have already stated that the fire from the Servian batteries had not even been able to reach the Bulgarian lines, and that, therefore, we had been enabled to watch

the fight from our batteries without running any serious danger. Now, as we were nearly in Slivnitza, that is a good mile or more in rear of our lines, we suddenly heard a curious whizzing over our heads, and immediately afterwards we saw shells bursting both before and behind us. A glance backwards showed us that shells were already beginning to pitch near the 'Gutscheff Palace,' which up to now had enjoyed complete immunity from the enemy's fire, and we felt that the Servians had really been very amiable in not directing the fire of their long-range batteries to that spot until after we had left it. Evidently they had now, in the evening, brought one of their two Krupp batteries into action, otherwise the sudden fire at such long distances would have been quite inexplicable. Anyhow, it was a very unpleasant sensation to have Servian shells come flying into a place where we had thought ourselves as safe as in Abraham's bosom.

In the Prince's headquarters the most lively mood prevailed, which was not even much disturbed by the report that towards evening the Servians had carried out movements of troops on an extensive scale near our left flank, which seemed to point to the intention of throwing a strong corps against Bresnik, and of undertaking an offensive movement from there, over Pernik, towards Sofia. It was considered sufficient to let Captain Popoff follow in that direction with three battalions—in fact, one did not attach much importance

to that operation as yet. This was probably quite wrong, but one can understand it by considering how our headquarter-staff had their hands full with what was nearest, namely with Slivnitza. Here certainly everything was going wonderfully well: not only had our 'strayed' troops found their way back again, but late in the evening a report came in from the right wing, in which Bendereff said that he had continued the engagement even after nightfall, and had thrown the enemy back a further three and a half miles. This was another victory, of which we had known nothing! Affairs were turning out well, and for the first time I sought my hard couch with a feeling of complete safety, without any foreboding that further despatches were to throw the headquarters into the greatest tribulation.

The Third Day.

Where had the fog gone to that had hitherto lain over Slivnitza? Bright warm sunshine smiled down from the heavens as I stepped out of doors at seven on the morning of November 19, and it seemed like a continuance of that feeling of exultation of the night before, and like a promise of impending brilliant victory. I welcomed this release from fog, rain, and snow as the prisoner welcomes freedom, and with a heart twice as light as usual I went to the 'Konak,' as the miserable village inn had been christened which served the Prince and his staff as quarters. It was like a jet of

cold water to see the long faces that met me there. 'For heaven's sake, what has happened?' I asked Baron Riedesel, who was the first I met. 'Bad news,' was the reply; 'the Servians have advanced beyond Bresnik, and are threatening Sofia. The Prince is going there at once to organise the defence.' The Servians advanced beyond Bresnik—that meant not only the capital menaced, but the gravest danger for the army at Slivnitza! Had the Bulgarians been victorious throughout two days of heroic fighting only to be taken prisoner now? I would not believe the news at first; but there was no help for it; there was the Prince's carriage, and standing near it the Prince himself ready for a start. If Prince Alexander left his troops on the eve of battle, then indeed—that I knew for certain—there must be terrible necessity for it; then things must be going very badly. What had happened in the night to explain this turn of the tide? The officer commanding at Bresnik had telegraphed on the 18th, towards evening, that he was no longer able to hold out against the Servians, that he was falling back on Sofia, and asked for sufficient reinforcements. Where were these to be got from? In Sofia there were no troops at all, and the reinforcements on the way there had only just left Ichtiman. Even if these were to reach Sofia in time, there were no officers there to assume the command, and yet some man was needed at that spot who would be capable of uniting all the elements of defence

and of carrying them with him. 'The centre of gravity of events,' said Prince Alexander, 'lies for the moment on the Bresnik-Sofia line; hard as it is for me, I must go there. Slivnitza has been held for two days, and I dare say can be held a little longer!' Notwithstanding his apparent calm Prince Alexander was deeply moved at leaving Slivnitza. He possesses in a high degree that feeling, common to the Hohenzollerns, that a Prince must be where his people in arms are fighting, and where the danger is greatest. To have to exchange the part of a leader in battle for that of an organiser was hard, and if the Prince did so it could only be because his sense of duty told him that he was bound to go where he could best further the cause of his country, irrespective of personal inclinations and scruples. Before this sober reasoning everything else had to give way, even the very natural apprehension that his enemies might maintain he had deserted his troops at the moment of danger. I am of opinion that it is nothing so very great courageously to face the enemy's fire, for millions have done so before us, and millions will do so after us. I place a higher value on the moral courage of him who from a sense of duty exposes himself to such a reproach.

My own resolution was quickly made; I said to myself that where the Prince was, the decisive blow would be struck—and five minutes later a horse was

saddled and I was on the road to Sofia. It was no light matter to do so, even for me. I left Slivnitza in company with M. Stambuloff, the President of the House of Deputies, who had reached the headquarters at the same time as I. It was one of the most uncomfortable rides I ever made. We had barely left Slivnitza a quarter of an hour, when a most violent cannonade commenced. Stambuloff and I pulled up our horses and listened; had we not better turn round and go back to the lines? It was a very awkward predicament for us, but finally we decided to continue our journey, and on we went at a steady trot. The nearer we got to Sofia the louder was the booming of the guns, and it seemed as if the increasing distance had no effect on the transmission of sound. Repeatedly the question of returning was discussed, and it was only on arriving at Sofia that we were quite sure about not turning back.

The picture presented by the capital was calculated to increase our nervous mood. Five miles outside the town we began to meet numbers of inhabitants who had been drawn towards the sound of the guns by an inquisitiveness which had even mastered the fear expressed on all faces. Everybody crowded round Stambuloff, who was universally known, and asked how things were going at Slivnitza. Ah! if we had only known that ourselves! Whoever was not deaf could hear that the fight was still raging, for the cannonade never ceased

even for a minute, and seemed indeed to be getting still stronger. The streets were filled with excited people, many shops were closed—in short, it looked as if the entry of the Servians were hourly expected.

My first visit was to the Prime Minister, Karaweloff. On the way I met an acquaintance wandering about disconsolately near the Palace. 'Do you know that the Servians are already at Kustinbrod? They will be at Bali-Effendi almost immediately. To-night they will be here; the beginning of the end!' Now I know the Sofians to be the most incredible scandal-mongers, and I know that one must not believe anything of all the rumours that are circulated there, but the ride in from Slivnitza and the circumstances connected with it had made me so nervous that I actually took all this to be partially true. At Karaweloff's, too, I did not find a very cheery humour. The reinforcements from Ichtiman must soon be here, then the Prince would place himself at their head and go out by Bali-Effendi to meet the enemy at Bresnik. It was hoped that it might be possible to stop the Servians there; nothing was lost as yet, still the national bank and its money bags had been moved to Plevna, and the archives of the different ministries would follow immediately. Karaweloff's room was continually besieged by callers, and as soon as one despondent face had disappeared, another appeared looking still more so. And on looking out of the window one saw the people in the streets running about in

a perfectly brainless way. There could be no doubt about it; by far the greater number of the inhabitants thought the game was all up; only some few still dared to hope, and laboured ceaselessly to counteract the impending evil and to stay the panic. A decided exception to all this was to be found in the person of a young woman who was sitting in Karaweloff's study and who took an active part in the conversation. Madame Katinka Karaweloff, the Premier's amiable wife and indefatigable coadjutor, maintained an imperturbable calm in the face of all the Job's comforters who surrounded her. 'Have no fear,' she said; 'it is impossible that our boys should be beaten by the Servians, and since it is impossible it cannot take place. Wait a bit; now we seem to be down, in twenty-four hours we shall be on the top again.' I admired this unshaken calmness and confidence, but to my shame be it confessed that under the influence of the general panic I was only able to share it in part. Later on it was said, and with considerable justification, that on November 19, of the entire population of Sofia, Madame Katinka Karaweloff had been the only *man*.

By this time it was twelve o'clock, and after having found my carriage, which I had sent to Sofia with telegrams the night before, and having seen it ready for a start in case of emergency, I went to the Union Club to get over the necessary operation of breakfasting as quickly as possible. There, at the 'rendezvous' of society and

diplomats, I found the same panic as in the streets. I heard that the foreign representatives were going to address a note to the Government in which the Prince was begged not to defend Sofia, but in the interests of its citizens to deliver it up without fighting—a note which the rapid march of events ultimately prevented from being delivered. I heard that the Servians were advancing on all sides, that they were only twelve miles from Sofia, that one must expect them here in a few hours, 'at the latest to-morrow morning,' and I heard the song of 'the beginning of the end' in every conceivable key. At the same time I was told that Tsankoff's partisans, under the protection of the Russian consulate, were plucking up spirits, that they went about among the populace saying that all had come about like this for having fallen off from Russia, that this opportunity ought to be taken to regain Russia's aid by turning out the Prince, that he, Tsankoff, in concert with the Russian Consul-General Köjander, was prepared to assume the provisional government, and that all preparations to that end were already made. Somewhat dazed by all this, I went to the Palace to find Uwalieff, the Prince's A.D.C., who had accompanied him from Slivnitza. I met him on the way to the telegraph office. 'What news?' 'Gutscheff is holding out.' 'And Bresnik?' 'No telegrams.' I went to the Hotel de Bulgarie, where of course nothing was to be heard either, although all the world congregated there, eagerly discussing the events.

Finally I set off to seek Karaweloff once more, with whom the War Minister was also sure to be at this moment, when I saw Tsanoff, the Foreign Minister, coming out of the Palace with a beaming face. I quickly turned towards him, but before I had time to ask a question, he called out: 'Bresnik is taken, the Servians are beaten; Popoff is marching on Trn.'

If King Milan had appeared amongst us at that moment the surprise could not have been greater. So all this fear and anxiety had been unnecessary, this road also was barred to the Servians, a new victory had been achieved by the Bulgarian arms, and the Prince's fall and Tsankoff's presidency had once more come to nought. The poor old man, I mean Tsankoff, promptly retired into his shell, and that with all the more alacrity as he was supposed to have heard of a story which was circulating in Sofia at that time, to the effect that he, Tsankoff, the president of the future provisional government, was to be hanged on the big pear tree outside Kojander's window as a fit preliminary to the entry of the Servian troops into Sofia.

If the hearts of the Russian Consul-General and M. Tsankoff were deeply chagrined at the news of the Bulgarian victories, the inhabitants of the town on the contrary changed from a state of brainless panic into that of perfectly boundless delight as soon as the good news became generally known—a rapid change such as does not give one a very favourable opinion of the

constancy of the human mind. I was, however, not able to witness this change, for as soon as it was known, five minutes after the tidings of the victory, that the Prince would now immediately return to Slivnitza, I also mounted my carriage, and again accompanied by Stambuloff was soon rolling back in hot haste to the place we had left that morning on horseback. We were naturally in a happier frame of mind than in the forenoon; still, all anxiety was not removed, for the ceaseless boom of guns indicated the continuance of the fight. Orderlies and doctors whom we met on the road told us that Gutscheff had victoriously beaten off all attacks of the Servians, and when we were within half a dozen miles of Slivnitza an officer informed us that the Bulgarians had assumed the offensive along the entire line. The ground was burning under our feet, and I made the coachman push on at top speed, so that by five o'clock we reached Slivnitza, where the news of the great victory was confirmed. We mounted our horses at once and rode on to our positions, where in the meanwhile the fighting had died out. The darkness which had already come on prevented us from seeing what changes had taken place on the scene of the engagement, but one could judge by the cheerful faces of the officers alone that the day had been more than good. Gutscheff and his staff had not yet returned to the 'Palace,' and as we rode off to look for them we noticed the first sign of victory—our batteries were no

longer in their old positions: they had advanced. Finally we found Gutscheff, but we had barely time to salute and congratulate him, when the sound of roaring, never-ending cheers from the right flank announced the approach of the Prince, who had left Sofia shortly after us. A minute later we had joined the Prince, who embraced Gutscheff with deep emotion. After listening to a short account of the action and thanking the officers once more, the Prince returned to Slivnitza, and it was only at the 'Konak' that I heard the particulars of the victory at Bresnik which had averted the danger threatening from that side. As I mentioned before, Captain Popoff with three battalions had followed the movements of the Servian troops towards our left flank on the evening of the 18th, and had finally reached Bresnik, taking with him everything in the shape of troops met with on the road. With that spirit of the offensive which was characteristic of the Bulgarian officers, and which perhaps was in a measure traceable to the fact that every captain wanted to score a victory 'off his own bat,' Popoff, early on the 19th, attacked and completely routed the enemy, who was taken by surprise, and forced him to retreat in all haste on Trn, whither he followed him at once.

The fighting at Slivnitza proper had taken the following course. At 8 o'clock in the morning Bendereff resumed the attack with the right wing, firmly resolved this time to push on to the Dragoman and to

hold the enemy's line of retreat, the Slivnitza-Zaribrod road. The troops, inspired by their previous successes, performed prodigies of valour under their talented young leader.

They had acquired boundless self-confidence and had gained experience on the preceding days, which was now turned to account. It was looked upon as a certainty that the Servians could not resist the Bulgarian attack at the point of the bayonet, therefore the object to be attained was as quickly as possible to get near enough to the enemy to be able to use the cold steel. Bendereff told me later on, that when once he had given the order to attack he was hardly able to keep the troops back. By instinct they seemed to have grasped the theory of the dead point, and realising that they suffered considerable losses at long ranges, though hardly any at all when they had reached the foot of the steep hill they had to storm, they rushed towards the hillside at top speed. After a short breathing time there, they began their work. And what climbing it was! Near Slivnitza the mountains were bad enough, but at the Dragoman they were both higher and steeper. I cannot conceive how the Bulgarians had the strength left for a bayonet attack after their climb. It is, however, still more inconceivable that the Servians, who had been resting in their positions, did not throw the Bulgarians, who were reaching them in a state of utter exhaustion, straight down the declivity. On this

third day, however, the moral hold of the Servians was already quite shaken, and in some instances the mere playing of the 'Djumi-Maritza,' which always preceded the storming, was sufficient to make them beat a hasty retreat. There is much controversy as to the utility of military bands; I myself was formerly not altogether in their favour, and it was only during this campaign that I began to waver in my unfavourable judgment. I do not know whether Bendereff is musically inclined, but he certainly employed music during the fights of the right wing in a degree such as I have never experienced in former campaigns. At every attack the band was playing, often marching at the head of the storming column, notwithstanding the very serious losses they suffered. It was universally admitted that the music had an enormous influence on the men, and we have seen that the Servians as well were unable to escape from it.

The most difficult attack was the one on the last particularly strong height, just before the Dragoman, where there was a regular hand to hand struggle. After it had been taken, the entire mountain range to the right of the high road up to Dragoman was in the hands of the Bulgarians, who sent on their scouts even into the village itself. At the same time the troops from the main position had advanced along the road to support the operations on the right wing, and had also thrown the Servians back. This completely altered the relative

positions of the two hostile forces, for whilst the Servians had been standing hitherto at right angles to the high road, that is forming a line from north to south, they had now been quite outflanked by the Bulgarians on the north, so that their front was now running from south to north-west. Bendereff had intended making this change of front still more marked, and at once to strike a blow from the north against the Servian left wing, forcing the enemy quite back from the Dragoman, so that they would have found themselves in a position running east and west, with their only line of retreat on Trn, which, moreover, was already threatened. At the moment, however, when he was going to commence the attack, he received orders from Gutscheff to halt for the time, until his advance could be supported by the troops from the main position, who were still far in rear. I believe that Gutscheff, who from the main position was bound to judge by the general situation, could not well have given any other order; on the other hand, Bendereff maintains that he would have inflicted a terribly bloody defeat on the Servians if he had been allowed to throw himself with his battalions on the demoralised rabble. His view may be right, but at that time it was not yet known at headquarters to what extent the Servian troops were demoralised, and it required several days more before we were clear about that point. Without this conviction Gutscheff could not well, according to my view, allow

the right wing alone to undertake such a risky operation.

Once more, towards half-past two, the Servians tried to rally for an attack, and moved in considerable strength against the left wing of the main position, where an extremely fierce struggle ensued ending in a total defeat of the Servians. And now Gutscheff ordered a general advance along the entire line; the left wing, which was bent back, wheeled up into line and marched forward, the troops of the main position accelerated their advance along the high road, Bendereff's division descended from the mountains, and the Bulgarian masses, rolling on, swept the Servians back at every point, until darkness coming on forced them to halt. The third battle of Slivnitza was over, and had finally settled the Servian defeats of the first two days.

All these events were discussed at headquarters in a very joyous mood; the defence was done with, and a new chapter of the history of this war was about to begin, in which the parts were exchanged and the defence devolved upon the Servians, whilst the Bulgarians took up the offensive.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER THE VICTORY.

A glimpse of sunshine—The Bulgarian headquarters—The 'Konak'—Servian prisoners of war and deserters—A 'Prussian' patrol—The reinforcements—The defence of Widdin—Popoff at Trn and Panitza in Servia.

AFTER three days of continuous fighting, our troops had well deserved two days of rest, and, indeed, it was indispensable to grant them, if only for the purpose of readjusting the different parts of the force, as the battalions on joining had always been employed wherever they were momentarily most wanted. The Servians required rest even more than we, so that we could spend these two days as if we were in the profoundest times of peace. Throughout the day the sun was smiling down upon us, warm and May-like, indeed June-like, and along the entire position at Slivnitza there reigned the greatest animation and an hilarity hitherto unknown. The sun at last thawed the limbs which had been frozen for six days and made the blood flow more rapidly through the veins, and to the sense of bodily comfort was added the pride and the joy over the victories that had been achieved. The troops for the first time had

experienced a brilliant atonement for their long privations and exertions, for they had been able to requite the Servians somewhat for their wicked invasion, and the effect of this was indescribable. The poor fellows, in their clothes covered all over with the mud of the trenches and with their stomachs half empty, quite revived, and when Prince Alexander visited the various positions he was met by such enthusiastic joyous cheers as if the troops had never lived otherwise than amongst the fleshpots of Egypt under an Italian sky. The remembrance of the past hard—very hard—times was gone, and sunshine and high spirits united in changing the wet, dirty, and bloody war scenes of the last few days into a scene of merry camp life. The bands were playing cheerful tunes, the officers from the various lines and batteries visited each other, the troops were proudly showing off the Servian trophies they had taken, of which there were quantities in the Bulgarian camp. Nearly everybody had a rifle, sword, revolver, some cooking utensil, a cap, a pocket-book, or some such article taken from the 'Serbskis,' and if these things were mostly very worthless, they were endowed with all the more *pretium affectionis*.

And as we remained undisturbed by 'alarums and excursions' during those two days, this pause in the fighting may be utilised in making the reader more familiar with Prince Alexander's headquarters, and the individuals composing it. There we find, to begin with,

Prince Francis Joseph of Battenberg, the Prince's youthful brother, who was serving as a subaltern in the Prussian foot-guards, and happened to be on leave in Bulgaria when the revolt broke out at Philippopolis. As was natural, he did not like to leave his brother in the moment of danger, but accompanied him to Philippopolis, where he remained until the war began. When the danger of a Servian invasion became more imminent, he received a letter from the colonel of his regiment, pointing out that his staying much longer in Bulgaria might be incompatible with his military position, and hinting that it would be best, either to return at once or to send in his papers as a Prussian officer. The Prince adopted the latter course, whereupon the Russians at once scattered telegrams about the world, which tried to represent the proceedings as if the Prince had thrown his commission at the German Emperor's feet in a brusque and offensive manner. The well-meaning intention, to discredit this Battenberg as well at Berlin, was, however, bound to fail, for there people were accurately informed as to the true state of affairs. I believe I may assert that the Emperor William never expected any other conduct from a German Prince and Prussian officer. Nevertheless this attempt at maligning him painfully affected the Prince, who is deeply attached to the old Emperor. When the war broke out, Prince Francis had already received his discharge from the German army by tele-

graph, and was therefore able from the first to take part in all the battles and engagements on the staff of Prince Alexander as a lieutenant of the 1st cavalry regiment. He was ever at his brother's side, sharing every danger and privation with him, and his cheerful, amiable disposition, his ever-ready wit, which hardly failed him even in the most trying situations, gained him the sympathies of all who met him there.

Next to him, I must mention in the first place the former brother officer of Prince Alexander, Lieutenant-Colonel Baron Riedesel of Eisenbach, late lieutenant in the Hessian dragoons, who now fulfilled the double functions of a comptroller of the household and principal aide-de-camp, thereby furnishing another proof that one can make anything out of a German officer if he be worth anything at all. Baron Riedesel had not only the care of the material comforts at headquarters, but every opportunity was given him of practising diplomatic and other arts in the intercourse with the journalists and diplomats who, alas, were sent to bother us by-and-by. At Philippopolis, before the outbreak of the war, he occupied a position which combined that of a personal confidant of the Prince and his political secretary; later on he did like every one else, he worked whenever there was any work to be done, no matter what the subject happened to be.

One of the most zealous and indefatigable of the Prince's servants was his private secretary, Mr. Menges,

who had charge of all the correspondence and ciphering, but who in the field, remembering his former service in the German army, did aide-de-camp's duties as well; who never shirked any danger or labour, who knew how to ingratiate himself with all, who got through the same amount of work as three ordinary mortals, and who, with all that, never lost his good humour. Like Riedesel, he also was an acquaintance of the Prince's earliest days, and had followed him to Bulgaria, there to take up the same confidential position which his own father occupies with Prince Alexander of Hesse, the Prince of Bulgaria's father.

This exhausts the German element in the head-quarters, and there only remain the Bulgarians, Captains Winaroff and Uwalieff, and Lieutenant Stojanoff, aides-de-camp, and Lieutenant Taneff, orderly officer and commander of the mounted escort. It is a fact which cannot in any way be contested, that Bulgaria is a 'peasant state,' and consequently, on arriving there, I had expected to find that the native Bulgarian officers would lack all those attributes which we in Germany are accustomed to meet with in the typical 'military dandy;' not that I can pretend that this expectation was very dreadful to me. I had simply imagined I should find a species of barrack-room officers, who knew their duties fairly well, but who were not of much account from a social point of view, and in this, as in many another expectation of the Bulgaria of to-day, I had

been totally mistaken. All the Bulgarian officers in the Prince's staff were gentlemanlike, amiable, and well-educated men, speaking several European languages, who would have been an ornament to any European drawing-room, who at the same time performed their duties with unparalleled perseverance and devotion, and who certainly did *not* look like officers of a 'semi-barbarous' army. The time I spent with them will ever be a charming and pleasant reminiscence.

Though not actually belonging to the Prince's head-quarters, still I must mention two others, viz. the Adjutant-General of the army, Captain Petroff, and the officer commanding the artillery, Captain Panoff. Petroff, the most youthful Adjutant-General of our own or any other time, was barely twenty-six years of age, and looking younger still. An intelligent, industrious worker, full of self-reliance, somewhat of an optimist, cool and collected in action, very merry and cheerful in the hours of recreation, not quite unconscious that his neat little black moustaches suit him remarkably well—such is the Bulgarian Adjutant-General. Outwardly of very different appearance is Captain Panoff—a tall, powerfully built man, with a slight beard, who looks older than he is, and who seems at first sight to have something hard in his features. No sooner, however, does one talk with him and get to know him better, than this impression is changed, and one gains the conviction that one has to do with a highly culti-

vated and truly remarkable man. He possessed great influence with the Prince, and if the artillery contributed so much to the Bulgarian victories at Slivnitza, and subsequently, it is in a great measure due to its leader. He is a man with ideas of his own, but had been in very bad odour with the Russians, who for some time back had demanded his removal from the army, as they very rightly believed that he was one of those who had set themselves the task of starting and fostering national aspirations amongst the Bulgarian officers.

I have just called Petroff the most youthful of all Adjutant-Generals, but we find this attribute of youthfulness amongst the staff in general, of which no member was more than thirty-one. The Bulgarian army simply followed even in this point the example set them by Prince Alexander, who himself only numbered twenty-eight years of age.

The way the staff were quartered at Slivnitza was extremely primitive; the old 'Khan' possessed one large, unflagged, taproom, flanked on either side by a little cabin, and from which a door opened straight into the stables. In one corner was the only fireplace, used for cooking, across the other a kind of drinking bar, and besides this there was a long deal table with narrow benches. That was all. The best of the two cabins, which even boasted of a bedstead, was set apart for the Prince, the other one for Prince Francis. Riedesel had

taken up his abode behind the bar, where there were, moreover, two little wooden boxes, which their keeper, Menges, had labelled with the pompous names of 'Bulgarian State Archives' and 'Chancery of the Order of Merit.' All the other gentlemen simply slept side by side on the hard floor of the room, and happy was he who possessed a blanket besides his greatcoat. As last inhabitant of this apartment, which combined bed, dining, and sitting-room, with kitchen and council-chamber, I must mention a small terrier, for which Baron Riedesel had sent to Sofia as a personal protection, since on the first night a rat had made the fortunately unsuccessful attempt to crawl into his mouth.

It was only in the course of these two days of rest that we were able to realise in the Bulgarian headquarters how complete our victories had been, and this was mainly owing to the depositions of the numerous Servian prisoners. They were well, though somewhat thinly dressed; their clothes were surprisingly clean, indeed, considering their having camped out in mud and rain, incredibly so; their general bearing was soldier-like and smart. I regret, however, being compelled to say that, as regards moral tone, I have never seen more wretched soldiers. Without raising the slightest difficulties they, on being questioned, gave every possible information about position and strength of the Servian army, and, moreover, did so quite truth-

fully; in fact, they appeared most eager to make these treasonable depositions, and seemed anxious to outdo each other in relating details which they were bound to know would do their country the greatest harm. There was not the slightest sign of depression at being made prisoners; on the contrary, the men seemed to be very happy at being safely housed and removed from the scene of fighting. Whether it was the expression of their actual views or whether they hoped to ameliorate their position by doing so, whenever King Milan's name was mentioned they broke out in the most awful imprecations, such as could not be repeated here. They threw the whole blame of this war on him, and many expressed a hope that he would now be shot by his own soldiers. The Servian officers were treated hardly less severely, and anyone who understood anything of military spirit was bound to admit that such speeches were only possible with men in a state of moral dissolution. This rather repugnant spectacle was repeated throughout the campaign, especially when more and more deserters came in. These could be divided into three classes, according to the reasons they gave for their desertion. (1) Those who maintained that, being Bulgarians by nationality, they would not fight against their own brethren; (2) those who declared that the want of warm food and clothing made it impossible for them to stay any longer with the army; and finally, (3) those who coolly stated, as their reason for having deserted, that in

the course of the war they had made the discovery that one ran very serious risks of being killed, and as this was not at all in accordance with their wishes they had preferred to give themselves up to the Bulgarians, so as to place themselves out of harm's way. Already, during the last days' fighting at Slivnitza, many deserters came in, and in the afternoon of the 20th a very singular incident occurred. Two Servians, who had run into the Bulgarian lines, were brought into headquarters, and there made the following deposition. Their battalion had mutinied, killed their leader and all the officers, and were only waiting for the Bulgarians in order to give themselves up. They, the two prisoners, were ready to lead the Bulgarians to the village where the mutineers were waiting. This story did appear rather too 'tall'; as, however, the prisoners, notwithstanding the threat of shooting them in case they had lied, maintained the assertion, Lieutenant Stojanoff was sent with a detachment of cavalry to inquire into the affair, and, if it should be confirmed, to bring in the rebel battalion. Now, though there were no signs of the battalion to be found at the village in question, still the inhabitants corroborated the fact that some five or six hundred Servian soldiers, without officers and without any military order, had been there throughout the day and had gradually dispersed towards nightfall. Was the deserters' story true or not? At the Bulgarian headquarters they dared not decide the question, and therefore the two prisoners were left unmo-

lested. Another incident remained without any satisfactory explanation. As early as the 20th, a rumour was current to the effect that the Servians had abandoned a battery on a height, evacuated by them but not occupied by us, and situated about four or five miles in front of our left centre. From causes which were connected with the inefficient performance of the reconnoitring duties incumbent on the cavalry, we had been unable to verify this, and it was only on the afternoon of the 21st that a volunteer reconnoitring party rode off towards the height in question, consisting of Prince Francis, Baron Riedesel, Lieutenant-Colonel Corvin,[1] just arrived from Eastern Roumelia, Mr. Menges, myself, and Lieutenant Taneff, with twenty horsemen. As we were trotting along in line I could not help laughing aloud; true, the Bulgarian army, after the departure of the Russian officers, had become a purely national one, still this patrol was, with the exception of Taneff and his men, an entirely Prussian one. Prince Francis, Riedesel, Corvin, Menges, and I had all worn Prussian epaulettes, and it was certainly by a curious chance that we were thus setting out together to look for these guns. To make the story short, it all came to nothing, though we had pictured to ourselves how fine it would be to drag even one gun into camp with our saddle-horses. Nevertheless they had been there, and during one whole day, as the peasants

[1] Formerly Prussian officer, and now commanding the Bulgarian cavalry brigade.

told us, they had been standing ready for us without any protection, and it was only thanks to our own dilatoriness that the Servians had been able to fetch them away a few hours before our arrival. Why they were left there so long, the gods alone can tell!

After the third day's fighting it had been decided at once to assume the offensive; for this reason, and also because after all one was not quite safe from the Servians resuming the offensive, the orders for the reinforcements to march with the utmost exertions were repeated. When we returned to Slivnitza from the lines, on the evening of the 20th, they had arrived.

'The Tirnova regiment, the Primor regiment, four Roumelian battalions, 13,000 men present!' With this report a young officer who had brought these troops from Eastern Roumelia galloped up to the Prince, saluting with his sword. And in rear of the lines, in a long hollow, where formerly a solitary camp kettle used to simmer, there was now a whole forest of bayonets, and, as the Prince approached, a cheer burst forth, so overpowering, so deafening, that I never heard the like before. It was as if the men had known that their arrival sealed the fate of the Servian army. From Jamboli and Hermanli they had hurried up in gigantic marches, through rain and through snow, over the Balkans, without resting day or night, imbued with the one desire, to come to the assistance of their fighting brethren. Day's-marches of thirty-five miles were the

rule, and the Primor regiment had covered in the last thirty-two hours *sixty miles*, during which time only sixty-two men fell out, from a total of close on 4,500. Surely one of the most gigantic achievements to be found in history. With all that, the men looked so fresh and strong, one noticed so little weariness, that one might have led them against the enemy on the spot without hesitation. As we got nearer to Slivnitza, soldiers, nothing but soldiers. The last battalions were marching past the Prince's 'Konak' in never-ending procession, and when we thought that it was all over, yet another battalion came by. In front of the Konak a band was playing 'Djumi-Maritza;' with cheers the troops replied to the Prince's greeting as they passed. *The Bulgarian army was present!*

At the Konak, further and good news had come in. Captain Usunoff, with his Turkish and Bulgarian volunteers, had victoriously and with severe loss repulsed General Leshjanin's attack on Widdin, and two other reports said laconically: 'Captain Popoff has taken Trn;' 'Captain Panitza has entered Servia north of Zaribrod.'

That Popoff was marching on Trn, after having occupied Bresnik, we knew, and his telegram was therefore not unexpected. But Panitza! Who or what is Panitza? When the revolt broke out at Philippopolis, he was a so-called 'regimental auditor,' that is a civilian

holding a judicial appointment in the Eastern Roumelian War Office, and an active member of the revolutionary committee. Then he was made president of the permanent court martial at Sofia, and after the declaration of war by Servia he was appointed captain with command of those very Macedonians of whom I have already given an account, and whom, for the sake of brevity, I will continue to call the 'Brigand Brigade.' When Panitza had arrived at Sofia with his men, he asked permission to use them as a guerilla corps, to operate on the enemy's flank, and if possible, in his rear. The Macedonians were splendid material for this kind of warfare; Panitza was known to be a regular daredevil, and so his request was granted, without very sanguine feelings, however, as to his success. Panitza disappeared in a north-westerly direction from Sofia, and for days nothing was heard of him. Then, one day three men rode into camp and brought a letter from Panitza and a bag. The letter stated that he had beaten the Servians in several fights, had taken many prisoners and rifles, and had crossed the Servian frontier north of Zaribrod. In the, not altogether wrong, assumption that such a surprising report might perhaps not be straightway believed, he had taken care to provide proof positive, and that in a decidedly original way; for, when the bag was opened, there fell out of it the official seals of the Servian custom houses and villages occupied by Panitza. There could now be no further doubt, and Panitza's brigade,

at first hardly noticed, was taken *au sérieux*, and it was at once decided to send him reinforcements with all haste in the shape of troops of the line.

And so everything was going on as well as could be desired, and we only had the one anxiety lest European diplomacy should throw obstacles in our way. For the present, however, there was no sign of this.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE POWER OF SUCCESS.

Revulsion of public opinion in Europe—Russia—Germany—A shower of congratulatory telegrams—The feeling in Bulgaria—Bulgarian patriotism—The Turks.

It was with a certain leisurely feeling that Europe awaited the news of Servian victories, and its public press was already discussing the conditions which the victorious King of Servia would impose upon the conquered Bulgarians at Sofia. There was hardly any more mention made of Prince Alexander; he was looked upon as a thing of the past, for it was clear that there could be no further place in Bulgaria for the *defeated* Prince. If he had been defeated, and his army annihilated in a terrible, sanguinary conflict, how bitterly would he have been reproached with having, in mad folly, led such an inefficient army to certain destruction, with having sacrificed his soldiers to gratify his personal vanity, with having brought misery upon an entire nation. With the exception of those who knew him personally, and of a few of his countrymen who still looked upon Alexander Battenberg as Prince of Bulgaria in the light of a compatriot, everybody would have thrown his stone at him. The

Servian generals, however, would have been great captains, and perhaps Milan would even have become a hero, and yet Prince Alexander, after his defeat, would not have been an atom worse than he was now after his victories.

'Success,' thou magic word! When the telegrams from Slivnitza, the small Bulgarian village, announced to the astonished world that Servia's much bepraised army was beaten, that the Bulgarians' 'unruly hordes' had thrown back in impetuous storm the thrice superior enemy; that Prince Alexander, leading and inciting his troops and exposing himself unsparingly to all dangers, had been the soul of victory himself—what a change! The cannon's iron mouth had spoken, the dream of a Servian Piedmont was dissipated, and it had been shown where the most energy and pluck was to be found—with Servia's King or Bulgaria's Prince, with Servia's or Bulgaria's people!

The sympathies of public opinion in all countries flew towards that very Prince Alexander who had just been so much abused, they bowed down before his successes—let it be said as an extenuating circumstance, before the manly vigour that achieved them. There was no more talk of deposing the Prince, and public opinion *unanimously* declared that the Bulgarians had fought for and gained their 'charter of liberty,' that the bloodless revolution of Philippopolis had now been surrounded by the rays of military glory, and that

the conquest of Eastern Roumelia had been completed at Slivnitza.[1] In Austria, where enthusiasm for the Servians had been the order of the day, the change took place with the greatest rapidity, and especially the largest and most influential paper of that country, the 'New Free Press,' stood out with as much warmth as political sagacity for rendering justice to this victory. In Russia also public opinion raised its voice as much as it was allowed. The bond which existed between Russia and Bulgaria was recalled to mind, and it was demanded that this obstinate animosity should be abandoned, that the accomplished fact should be recognised now that it had been sealed with blood and glory. Even in a country so given up to absolutism, the pressure of public opinion was so powerful that the Government dared not oppose it in the first moment of enthusiasm. The different Governments, of course, seeing their artificially built up plans threatened with complete collapse, would not give up their preconceived opinions, and more blood had to flow before they recognised that they had been steering a wrong course.

Doubtless the most complete change of public opinion was that which took place in Germany. Throughout the country, but especially in the army, there was the greatest rejoicing that a German prince in a foreign land had brought the German name and

[1] It is certainly a curious coincidence that *Slivnitza*, derived from the word 'Slivanie' (Union), is synonymous with 'means of union.'

German fighting qualities to so high renown under such difficult circumstances. We could feel these vibrations of the public voice even in the dingy 'Konak' of Slivnitza, for the congratulations which the electric wires brought from all parts of the mother-country were countless. I saw those telegrams, and the subsequently received letters, arranged in huge volumes, later on at Sofia—an ample testimonial of the affection his country still had for Prince Alexander. That his friends and acquaintances should have telegraphed was natural enough, but all kinds of clubs, public bodies, communities, totally unknown individuals, bodies of officers, sent the expressions of their joy and sympathy. The reading of these telegrams was frequently very interesting, and they varied from the servile phraseology of officialdom to hearty expressions, such as 'Give it 'em hot;' 'Go in and win.' One telegram in particular, which I regret only being able to quote from memory, attracted my attention; it ran somewhat as follows: 'Respectful congratulations on his just victories to the Prince who knew how to avert the bloody consequences of a revolution, who showed how he valued the benefits of peace, and who only drew the sword when wicked arrogance threatened his own country and people. From the miners of Gleiwitz.' What a pity that personages in more exalted positions had not as just an appreciation of Prince Alexander's actions and character as these simple working men!

But what the Hessians, the Prince's especial countrymen, wrote and telegraphed is quite incredible. In no part of the Empire was there such universal interest in the Bulgarian victories, nowhere was there so much money collected for the wounded, as in Hesse, and nothing would have surprised me less than suddenly to see a few battalions of Hessian Bashi-Bazouks turn up in the midst of a battle. We wanted them only too badly. How often, during the first day of Slivnitza, did I not hear the longing cry, 'Oh for only one German division!'

If these victories had made an immense impression abroad, they were bound to produce a still greater effect in Bulgaria itself, and firmly as the Bulgarians had clung to the union and the person of their Prince, it seemed still more impossible now to undo the union or remove the Prince. The partisans of Russia dared no longer go about openly in the light of day, and in this they acted very wisely. Together with the pride in their victories, a true Bulgarian national feeling grew more and more, especially in the army and amongst the officers. What had hitherto kept the Bulgarians together was religion and the bonds of race, whilst the actual meaning of a 'Fatherland' was more distant from their minds, and was simply non-existent during the Turkish rule. With the booming of the guns at Slivnitza this idea seems first to have burst upon them, and that throughout the entire people of Bulgaria, Bul-

garians and Turks. The reconciliation of the Christian and the Moslem faith, or more properly the recognition of the equal rights of the Mahomedans, has always been one of my pet theories, and during eight years I have fought for it with very wretched results, for the intolerant spirit that once led to the craze of the crusades is still rampant with us to-day. But now, after the battles of Slivnitza, and—as I would mention rather in anticipation of the narrative—throughout the war, it seemed to me as if this idea had taken a rapid stride forward, and had for the first time made a commencement towards realisation. I saw Turks and Bulgarians fighting side by side, and if the absence of the cross on the front of their busbies had not distinguished the Turks from the Bulgarians, no one would have thought that the representatives of two races were here standing together who but a few years ago had waged a most cruel war on each other. Though the Turks who were incorporated in the troops of the line always remained in a large minority compared to the Bulgarians, still in the Breslaw, Plevna, and Varna regiments they formed 10 to 15 per cent. of the whole. According to the opinion of all the officers, these Mahomedan soldiers fought quite splendidly, were in nothing behind their Bulgarian comrades, and frequently set them a good example. For this the fullest recognition was not wanting, both from their superiors, and, what is still more important for a subsequent peaceful existence, from their comrades, who,

though in the majority, often voluntarily resigned their places and allowed the minority to take precedence of them. This requires a short explanation. The Bulgarian army has taken over from the Russian the custom that when honours and rewards are given for conspicuous services in the field, they are not awarded to individuals, but given in a lump to the regiment, which distributes them amongst the different companies. In the companies, however, the men elect those from their number who are to be the recipients of these honours. Now, when the first crosses for valour were distributed, it was a singular circumstance that the Mahomedans, who formed an insignificant minority, received nearly as many crosses in some regiments as the Christians, and that by the choice of their comrades. The very first cross for valour of the first class adorned the breast of a Mahomedan. Does not this justify one in hoping that the same spirit of good fellowship and friendly tolerance may be ultimately introduced into everyday life?

Unlike the Turks, the Greeks did nothing towards defending the country, and even the victories only made at the most a painful impression on them. With too little energy to stand up against the Bulgarian movement, they waited for some one else to be their catspaw, and to save the heroic Greek people the trouble of proving their heroism themselves. And they are waiting still.

CHAPTER XIV.

FROM SLIVNITZA TO ZARIBROD.

Taking up the offensive—Attack on the Dragoman Pass—A diplomatic interlude—The heights of Dragoman taken—The Servians evacuate the pass—Advance on Zaribrod, and fight near the town —The Prince's entry.

AT half-past seven on the morning of November 22 there stood in front of the fortifications of Slivnitza, on the high-road to Dragoman, a Bulgarian brigade in column of march, formed of the Tirnova and Primor regiments, of four battalions each. Attached to this were two batteries, and two squadrons of cavalry. The command of the whole force had been given to the Roumelian Colonel Nikolajeff, whose instructions were to advance towards Dragoman and to take the pass. At the same time Captain Bendereff had received orders to attack the heights to the north-east of Dragoman with his troops, besides which he was to try and take the Servians in rear, cutting off their retreat through the pass if possible, by sending a detachment to execute a flanking march to the right. Gutscheff remained for the present with the main force at Slivnitza.

As the road almost up to the village of Dragoman was in the hands of the Bulgarians, Nikolajeff's column might have marched as far as that without any further ado, had it not transpired in the course of the march that we were not by any means sure whether the enemy had quite evacuated the heights to the left of the road. It consequently became necessary to have that part of the country reconnoitred by the cavalry during the advance, a thing which ought to have been done the day before. But the reconnoitring service generally was rather defective, and that important military duty was pretty frequently not carried out with that amount of intelligence one might in common justice have demanded. The troopers were slow and awkward as scouts, and one soon saw that this portion of their training had only been very little practised or not at all. In proportion as I acknowledge the good work done by the Russian officers in the Bulgarian infantry and artillery, so does it seem to me that the officers commanding the two cavalry regiments were by no means up to their work. To ensure rapid and reliable information, mounted gendarmerie or troopers of the Prince's body-guard had always to be employed, who carried out that duty very satisfactorily. Later on I frequently conversed with Bulgarian cavalry officers about this defect, which was universally acknowledged in the army, and they all assured me that the Russian cavalry colonels had only attached very small importance to the reconnoitring

service, and had consequently only practised it very superficially. The evil results of this neglect had now to be borne by the entire army, and not least by Colonel von Corvin, who had formerly commanded the body-guard, and who now, on assuming the command of the cavalry brigade, of course could not make good all these omissions in the twinkling of an eye. Another deficiency in the Bulgarian army which I have never been able to account for was the total absence of anything like spies, who could readily have been organised here in particular where the nature of the ground and the similarity of language and dress made it so easy to send out spies into the enemy's country. Amongst the mountaineers, who knew the whole district so accurately, excellent ones could have been found.

At last our scouts had verified the fact that the Servians had completely disappeared from our left flank, and that only the Dragoman pass and the heights to either side of it were occupied by them. On the extreme right of the Servian forces, on the top of a high hill, there distinctly stood out a battery placed in a kind of redoubt, commanding the whole country in its front, whilst newly made trenches could be discovered on the slopes in rear of Dragoman. Unquestionably the enemy's position was very strong, but as the Servians had given up many a good advanced position before, confining themselves really only to defending the pass, one was tempted to assume that the resistance offered

by them here was only intended to cover the retreat of the main army. However, we knew nothing for certain, nor did we know the strength of the Servian troops now facing us.

The attack could only be begun towards noon, and at first the Bulgarian infantry, under cover of the artillery placed to the left of the road, moved towards the Servian positions south of the pass. A first height, stretching out flat in front of the actual mountains, was taken without meeting with any great resistance, but behind that the advance slackened under stress of a very heavy fire. Close to the Bulgarian battery was a small hillock, on the top of which, at the commencement of the fight, the Prince took up his position with the staff. Our guns were shelling the Servian battery, which replied rather feebly, but never, oddly enough, thought of throwing a few shells towards our hillock. From the Servian battery they must have made out with perfect certainty that a large staff was assembled there, and they might easily have guessed that the Prince was one of the number. The more ground our troops gained, the more difficult it became to watch the action from this hillock, and when, moreover, firing commenced on our right, it became necessary to look about for another point of vantage, and it was decided to confer that honour upon a high hill, the last of the ridge, to the right of the road. Arrived at its foot the cravings of our stomachs became pressing, and the staff sat down

round a haystack near a sheep-farm and began unpacking the contents of their saddle-bags. There was not much, but our appetites being proportionately large, our stock was soon consumed. We were just thinking of making a start when an orderly rode up and delivered a packet of telegrams to the Prince. They contained a most charming surprise. When the Servians were nearly at the gates of Sofia, neither the Powers nor the Sublime Porte had been much moved thereby, but now that Bulgaria had been victorious they both reappeared once more with their diplomatic great guns. The Prince was to conclude an armistice, the Porte would send a special commissioner to Philippopolis to assume the government of Eastern Roumelia—in other words, it was intended to deprive the Bulgarians of the military advantages here and of the political ones at Philippopolis which they had gained by their three days' battle. This was not to be done quite so easily, however; and as the Servians had miscalculated in their estimate of the Prince's military genius, so the Powers undervalued his statesmanlike and diplomatic capacities. Almost in the midst of battle, with shells bursting within half a mile and the rolling of musketry to the right and left, the general was transformed into the statesman, the military staff into a diplomatic office. The scene was really a very remarkable one; the Prince was sitting on the haystack, his officers lying around him and writing diplomatic notes under his directions. One assured the Grand Vizier that

the Prince 'considered it both as his sacred duty towards those who had fallen on the battlefield and as incumbent on his military honour, neither to propose nor to accept an armistice before the complete evacuation of Bulgaria by the Servian troops, and that he could only assent to any proposals of peace when he found himself on the enemy's territory.' Another copied a circular note to the Powers drawn up by the Prince himself, in which they were informed that the Prince repudiated all responsibility if the Porte were to send a commissioner to Philippopolis. Such a measure would have the most fearful consequences, and therefore he, the Prince, begged that it should be put off, as well as the settlement of the Roumelian question, until peace had been established between Bulgaria and Servia. A third wrote instructions for the Foreign Office at Sofia, in which it was stated that the Prince was ready to do everything towards facilitating the conclusion of peace; that he therefore did not demand any cession of territory from Servia, but that he would be satisfied with a war indemnity of thirty million francs. Tsanoff, the Foreign Minister, was instructed to express himself in that sense towards the representatives of the Powers. All these telegrams were written out in pencil, on leaves torn out of note-books, and were at once despatched by an orderly to the field telegraph at Slivnitza. It seems that these hurriedly written telegrams were convincing in their expressions, for the Porte

renounced its commissioner, and the Powers ceased from urging the military occupation of Eastern Roumelia. And so, for once in a way, the pen had averted a threatening danger in the midst of powder and smoke. It was curious, but as soon as the telegrams had been despatched everyone felt confident that they would be effective, and when the members of the makeshift diplomatic office mounted their horses and once more became a military staff, hardly another thought was given to the notes, and the whole business was looked upon as settled in a manner favourable to Bulgaria. Let no one maintain after this that there is no such thing as presentiment.

During this interlude no one had been occupied with the fighting, but now our attention was once more taken up by its further course. We made haste to reach the hill top, which was quite impossible on horseback and difficult enough on foot. And yet the Bulgarians had taken this very hill three days ago at the point of the bayonet! During our ascent we found whole heaps of Servian cartridge-cases. A few mounds appeared to cover the remains of the Bulgarians who had fallen at the assault, whilst the bodies of the Servians were still lying about unburied. Everywhere on the light-coloured stone there were pools and traces of blood attesting the violence of the struggle and the amount of the losses. In war one gets hardened against sights such as these, and we only cast a furtive glance

at the dead, so as to give all our attention to the action going on before us.

All along the line the fire was raging. Our left flank had made great progress, as we could see, not only by the advancing of the skirmishers, but also from the fact that the Servian artillery had ceased their fire and had evacuated their redoubt. This was the result of a peculiarity of Servian artillery tactics, which may be attributed to the fact that in Servia a gun is not only looked upon as a simple instrument of warfare, but, like the colours, as a sort of symbol, the loss of which, being a disgrace, should be avoided at all hazards. Now that is a very fine theory, but in carrying it out it often happens that, out of anxiety not to lose them, the guns are retired at the very moment when they could produce the most telling effect. Whenever our infantry came within the most effective range of the Servian guns, these limbered up and moved to the rear with the greatest alacrity, so that, though we were never able to capture a single gun, we suffered only insignificant losses from artillery fire. Now a gun which does not kill anybody seems to me to have missed its vocation in life. Our infantry, in consequence, had again during the last part of the attack only to face infantry, which was besides under a brisk fire from the Bulgarian batteries. The Servians, already shaken, and now deserted by their artillery, were unable to resist the attack. One rush, and the position was taken, and the

enemy thrown back towards the pass, the mouth of which, however, they still held.

Towards four o'clock the firing on the right had increased and the Servians only held the height behind Dragoman, which has a rather steep descent towards the village, but which on the east is separated from the range of hills occupied by the Bulgarians by a deep ravine. Across this ravine the firing was going on, without, however, doing much harm to the Servians, who were well under cover in their trenches. This situation was changed the moment the storming of the heights on the left freed our artillery, who galloping on to a height south of Dragoman, commenced shelling the Servian position in the flank. The fire of our shrapnel shell must already have made life in those trenches very unpleasant, when we suddenly observed to our surprise that common shell also were beginning to burst in the Servian lines. At first no one could make out where they could be coming from, but finally, when we noticed that they came from slightly behind, we could only assume that Bendereff's flanking column was joining in the fight from the enemy's rear. And so it was in fact. Bendereff had selected a battalion and half a battery for this attempt, placing himself at their head in person. He had reached Berender by Golemo-Malovo, but had there gained the conviction that with his small force it would be impossible, as originally intended, to strike a blow at the centre of the pass,

which is nearly six miles long, and so to cut off the Servians. He had not been able to take more troops owing to the impassability of the mountains; besides, one battalion placed in a good position was quite sufficient to block the pass. When, therefore, Bendereff noticed that the engagement was at its hottest on the right flank near Dragoman, he determined upon using his detachment to threaten that portion of the Servian position, and advanced from Berender in a southerly direction on Dragoman. Soon he was able to bring his guns into action against the Servian flank, or even a little in their rear, and so it happened that his shells joined ours. Bendereff had drawn up his battalion in line in *single rank*, so that the four very strong companies looked like as many battalions, and in this formation he made them advance. The Servians, already hard pressed in front, and under a terrible artillery fire, seeing considerable forces suddenly appearing in their rear, could not think of holding their position any longer, and retired in great haste on the mouth of the pass, so that our troops were able to occupy the heights behind Dragoman without a struggle. Meanwhile darkness had set in, and a continuation of the fight was impossible. At the mouth of the pass some desultory firing was continued for a short time, without, however, any important result.

Already, in the course of the afternoon, when a victory of the Bulgarian arms could be predicted with

certainty, but when it was also clear that we should not get much beyond Dragoman, orders had been despatched to Slivnitza to send on an additional brigade at once to Dragoman, so that it might move forward the next morning with renewed energy. The main force was to leave Slivnitza early on the 23rd, and to follow along the high-road. We had, however, become convinced that the Servians would not hold out in the Dragoman pass, and that we should be able to force our way through the same without much difficulty, and perhaps to push on to Zaribrod and so to the frontier. As no shelter was to be obtained at Dragoman, and as, moreover, the baggage-train of the headquarters had been left behind at Slivnitza, we rode back there about half-past five, meeting the brigade which had been ordered to the front just outside Dragoman.

At Slivnitza there was no fresh news, and somewhat fatigued I retired to rest pretty early, though not without having first made all my arrangements for starting off the following day, the 23rd, for Dragoman, this time in heavy marching order, i.e. with carriage and all the horses, for I was firmly convinced that the headquarters would not return to Slivnitza again, but would pass the night *before*, or possibly *in* Zaribrod. As I had been told in the evening that this time fighting was to begin very early, I left before half-past six, and at eight reached Dragoman, or rather two little houses on the high-road at some distance from the village

and close to the mouth of the pass. As we had presumed, the Servians had practically evacuated the pass in the night; still it was not advisable to march straight in, as it was quite possible that they had laid a trap for us. Besides, there were Servian troops still in the hills to the left of the high-road, against whom our infantry came into action towards nine o'clock. About this time the Prince arrived near Dragoman, whence having rapidly inspected the positions which had been taken up, he proceeded to those two little houses, ordering all reports to be made to him there. One of the houses had already been turned into an ambulance, the other, a new erection, had nothing but bare walls. For over two hours we sat there in a state of inaction; every now and then there was a little firing on our left and an occasional wounded was brought in, but it was evident that the affair was unimportant. The peasants told us that King Milan had been the day before in that very house in which Prince Alexander was now sitting, and added that he had watched the battle from the heights above. Some of the Servian prisoners said the same, others again declared it to be untrue, so that to this moment I am not clear on the point. If, however, King Milan did get as far as this he certainly got no further, and he certainly never saw anything of the fighting at Slivnitza. To this day next to nothing is known of what actually took place in the Servian army, as the Servians had turned out all war correspondents, perhaps

with the very right feeling that things would occur on the Servian side which would not bear an unbiassed account. What the Servians published in their official telegrams offers such very unreliable material, that one really cannot make the slightest use of it. We were just exchanging views in the staff as to how the Servians would represent their defeats at Slivnitza, when, just before twelve o'clock, a message came in saying, 'The pass is completely evacuated; the Servians are retiring on Zaribrod.' Immediately everyone was in the saddle, and the carriages were got ready for a start, for no time was to be lost, if one did not wish to get mixed up with the marching columns in the pass itself, which would have prevented anything like rapid progress. Turning round I saw the Prime Minister, Karaweloff, who had just driven over from Sofia; by his side was Stambuloff, the warlike President of the Chamber, with whom I had made that fruitless ride to Sofia on the 19th. We greeted one another joyfully, and Karaweloff asked me to get into his carriage, an offer which I accepted all the more gratefully as I should now hear at first hand all that had taken place in Sofia these last few days. Karaweloff was immensely pleased, and told me of the enthusiasm that existed at Sofia, of the suppressed mortification of Tsankoff and his friends, of Kojander's departure, his Government having recalled him on some pretext or other, as this mischief-maker had really made himself too impossible of late; of the

reception of the wounded at Sofia; of the change in public opinion; and of a thousand and one other things. He had come out here into camp, partly because he could not bear staying at home any longer, and partly because the Powers were beginning once more to bother Bulgaria, and he therefore wished to consult with the Prince. However, we not only had something to talk about, but something to see as well. I do not understand and never shall understand why the Servians let us through the pass, even without the customary salute, for supposing the army as a whole was no longer capable of offering any effective resistance, surely a few battalions with bold, determined leaders could have been found who would have been quite sufficient to make our passage exceedingly difficult. The pass is narrow and tortuous; on either side the steep rocks rise up to a great height; to get out of the way of anything one meets would be out of the question; sometimes the road can be commanded for the best part of a mile from a projecting rock round which it winds; so that a few companies could have stopped the entire Bulgarian army for hours—and nothing was attempted, nothing happened. 'We shall drive to Zaribrod without any stoppage, and go on to the frontier to-day,' was Stambuloff's opinion, whilst the rather less optimistic Karaweloff was quite satisfied with simply reaching Zaribrod. I also had become an optimist, and believed that the Servians would not offer us any more resistance on Bulgarian

soil, and therefore I was—we all three in fact were—very unpleasantly surprised on suddenly hearing the booming of artillery on emerging from the pass. Further advance in our carriage was impossible, so I called up my servant who had followed with two saddle-horses, mounted my steed, while Karaweloff and Stambuloff requisitioned a couple of troop horses, and then we continued our journey on horseback to see what was going on at the front. We had barely gone a few hundred yards when we saw quite clearly how matters stood. The Servians had once more taken up a position on the heights to the north of Zaribrod, and had forced our troops to deploy against them. The situation did not look very nice for us, for these heights encircle the narrow plain between the mouth of the pass and Zaribrod like an amphitheatre, thereby not only commanding the approaches to Zaribrod, but also the greater part of the plain through which our troops were forced to march. However, it is one thing to find oneself in a capital position, but quite another to know how to turn it to account; and so it came about that the Servians neither barred the approach to Zaribrod nor watched what was going on in the plain; they simply defended themselves against the Bulgarians who were attacking the heights. In the plain an entire Roumelian brigade was formed up in reserve, and its close ranks offered an excellent target, but not a single shell was fired at them, as the Servians, for fear of losing their old guns,

had once more sent them back an incredible distance. The road to Zaribrod was certainly swept by small-arm fire, but this did not prevent Prince Alexander from entering the town at the head of the advanced guard of cavalry. Lieutenant Slaweikoff, who nine days ago had defended Zaribrod for five hours against an enemy *twenty times* his superior, rode at the Prince's side. Slaweikoff had been the last to leave Zaribrod with his troop of Bashi-Bazouks, and they well deserved to be the first to re-enter it now. Meanwhile the fighting before Zaribrod was not by any means over, and as this time I had been detained in the pass with Karaweloff and Stambuloff, I was able to watch from the plain how our troops advanced towards the hills, and how they forced back the enemy yard by yard, powerfully assisted by our ever-ready and ever-present artillery, which, unlike the Servian, always pushed to the front as far as ever possible. By nightfall we were in possession of the entire position with the exception of one nearly inaccessible hill, which we were no longer able to attack, and which was to cause us trouble enough the next day.

Towards six o'clock I rode into Zaribrod, where my good luck procured me one of the best quarters: good rooms, good beds, pleasant people, and passable food. As I am not in the habit of roughing it more than absolutely necessary, and as I knew, moreover, that we should spend at least the following day at Zaribrod, I made

myself as comfortable as possible in my new quarters, which I shared with a fellow-countryman, Mr. Paul Kaufmann, who was following the army in the service of the 'red cross,' and with whom I 'chummed' for the remainder of the campaign. A short visit to the new 'Konak,' where I heard that nothing special had occurred beyond what I had seen; a so-called dinner, consisting of preserves, tea, and wine; half an hour's work to telegraph the events of the day, and then I slept like a top—the first time in a real bed for ten days.

CHAPTER XV.

AT ZARIBROD.

The Bulgarian headquarters under Servian fire—Servian flags of truce—The proposed armistice declined—A height stormed—A brave Servian—The positions at Zaribrod.

It was not so much the consideration of the fatigue of our troops, as the difficulty of food supply and the necessity of collecting our whole force for an advance on Servian territory, that forced us to spend two whole days at Zaribrod. As I have so rarely had occasion to speak well of the Servians, I am all the more glad at being able to place on record that they maintained excellent order and discipline during their nine days' stay at Zaribrod, and that the inhabitants had no fault whatever to find with the enemy who had been quartered on them. In the villages also one never came across any devastation, the large flocks of sheep did not appear to have suffered the slightest loss; in short the Servians behaved quite admirably in this respect. It was said that in the districts of Trn and Widdin, the case was very different; after what I have seen here, however, I consider this statement as quite improbable. We were

all the more agreeably surprised at the condition of Zaribrod, as a report was current on the 22nd that the Servians, exasperated by their defeats at Slivnitza, had pillaged the town and then set it on fire—a report which was, perhaps, caused by the glow of the camp-fires with which the sky was red throughout the night. The Prince's headquarters were established in the same house in which King Milan had lived, and Prince Alexander slept in the same bed which King Milan had left so hastily at two o'clock on the morning of the 23rd. It seems that about that time the news that Panitza was getting suspiciously near Zaribrod from the north reached the Servian headquarters, which evidently, fearing to be cut off, had started off for Pirot post haste, in the middle of the night. We still found the house exactly as the Servians had left it. On King Milan's writing-table some papers lay scattered about; headings of memoranda; all sorts of things of no value to us. On a clean sheet of paper two fine donkey's ears had been drawn in pencil, but the head belonging to them was not finished. This paper was my share of the booty, and its value as an autograph would be considerably enhanced if I knew for certain who had drawn these donkey's ears, as found on King Milan's writing-table. One cannot pretend that life was particularly pleasant in those new headquarters, for as Zaribrod was quite commanded from the hill still occupied by the Servians, and as, moreover, the house

in question was situated in that part of the town which faced the hill, it was occasionally fired upon by the Servians, though apparently more as a pastime than from any evil intentions. The bullets only came singly; occasionally a whole hour passed without any; still they made walking about in the streets rather unsafe, so that towards noon orders were given to take the hill. Previously we had been working away to get guns into position on the adjacent heights against the Servian frontier, but owing to the great difficulty in climbing these hills the work was not yet completed. About three o'clock the attack was carried out by two battalions of the Primor regiment, being in preparation and execution simply a repetition of the previously described Bulgarian mountain attacks. From the town the operations could be pretty well watched, and everybody, civilians and soldiers, had turned out for that purpose. When the fire was at its hottest we also got our share of it, and the bullets very quickly cleared the streets, everybody seeking shelter in or behind the houses. How the Servians managed to let those bullets, which were evidently intended for the storming column, find their way into Zaribrod, is a puzzle to me, and one cannot find any other explanation than that they simply fired off their rifles straight into the air, without taking any aim whatever. The small losses of the Bulgarian storming column seem to confirm this assumption. Soon the wind carried the strains of the 'Djumi-Maritza'

across to us, but this time it was not to be over so quickly as on the two last days' fighting. The Servians held out, and there was a hand to hand fight which nearly gained us a Servian colour. It had already been torn from the grasp of the dying standard-bearer, when a Servian captain rushed into the *mêlée*, shot down four Bulgarians with his revolver, and seized the flag. At the same moment he sank down himself, bleeding from many wounds, but he still had time to throw the colour backwards down the incline, where a Servian soldier caught and saved it. I regret having forgotten the name of this brave officer, who was later on treated with the highest consideration when in captivity, and who happily recovered from his wounds. With his fall the resistance of the Servian troops was broken, and they fled in wild haste down the hill. I shall describe by-and-by what the scene of action looked like.

All the positions round Zaribrod were now in our hands, but the situation of the town remained somewhat precarious still, as the Servians were not four miles from its western entrance, and could have swept the whole extent of it with their artillery. I hardly like to think of the confusion which would have been inevitable if the Servians had bombarded the town during the night, crowded as it was with soldiers. That they did not do so was once more very amiable of them, as far as we were concerned, but it showed a very deficient knowledge of their own interests. We hardly dared to hope

that the night from the 24th to 25th would pass without shells, and therefore a portion of the troops were removed from the town to a position behind a height situated to the rear; every preparation was also made to leave the town with the headquarters whenever the Servian night bombardment should begin. Contrary to all expectations, we were left quite unmolested.

Whilst the weather had been dull and rainy on the 24th, the 25th was ushered in by bright sunshine. As I stepped out of my house, of which the other room was occupied by Colonel Nikolajeff, who was in command here, and by his staff, I saw outside the door nothing less than two Servians, bearing a flag of truce, who had brought a letter from the 'Commander-in-Chief of the combined Shumadja, Drina, Danube, and Morava divisions.' This letter contained a request for an armistice, as King Milan was ready, 'out of deference to the wish of the Powers,' to renounce the continuance of the war, and to conclude peace. What a pity that the Servian King had not been actuated by the same peaceful sentiments a fortnight ago, and that he only began to defer to the 'wish of the Powers' after his army had succumbed to the Bulgarians! To us, who in the course of time had learned very accurately what we had to expect from the loyalty of the Servians, the meaning of this letter was naturally quite clear. The Servian army was no longer capable of offering any resistance, and therefore King Milan now tried by diplomatic

means to prevent the Bulgarians from entering on Servian territory. If we had accepted his proposal and given him time to reorganise his army on the frontier, and to reinforce it, these peaceful sentiments and his 'deference to the wish of the Powers' would have speedily vanished into thin air as soon as his object was accomplished. The answer therefore was in the negative, and Colonel Nikolajeff informed the 'Commander-in-Chief of the combined &c. &c.' that he had no orders from Prince Alexander to cease hostilities, and therefore they would continue as before. But as the Servian commander had assumed such a long and fine title, the Bulgarians were anxious not to be behindhand, and Nikolajeff signed himself, 'Lieutenant-Colonel and Commander-in-Chief of the combined Bulgarian and Eastern Roumelian armies.' Now this title was not only longer than the Servian, but there was also more in it. Scarcely had this reply been made out than a new flag of truce arrived in the shape of a Servian colonel, who was also led to Nikolajeff. This time my own room was the place of meeting. It now appeared that the Servians had actually thought the Bulgarians fools enough to accept the armistice, for this Servian had forsooth not come as the bearer of new proposals, but was simply charged with determining the line of demarcation in conjunction with the Bulgarians. He was quite staggered when Nikolajeff informed him that there could be no question of an armistice, shrugged his shoulders and took his leave,

evidently very painfully impressed. If it had not already been settled that we were to cross the frontier on the 26th, this would have decided it.

After the Servian messengers had been disposed of, Prince Alexander rode with his staff on to the heights to the right of Zaribrod, to inspect the position that had been taken up there. In front of us we again saw stretching away to the right the same jumble of hills that had given us so much trouble at Slivnitza. On one of these Iwanoff's battery, well known to us from the days of Slivnitza, was established, and from there we could clearly see the Servian positions with their numerous trenches, facing us at a short distance; we even could make out small detachments on the march, and single men. Prince Alexander surveyed the situation for a considerable time, and consulted with Panoff as to how the attack could be carried out. Somewhat rashly, a good many officers had assembled in the battery, but the Servians remained true to their habit of overlooking these assemblies and did not send us a single shell, indeed they kept quiet throughout the day. From here a glance backwards enabled one to realise fully how very much the Servians had left undone on the 23rd. From this hill the entire plain between Zaribrod and the mouth of the pass could be commanded by a few batteries, the whole of our line of march could have been swept by the most terrible fire, and we should certainly not have reached Zaribrod without very serious losses, probably, in fact, we should

have lost a whole day. Although this was all as clear as day, the Servians had not noticed it, or else they had not made use of this wonderful artillery position from their old fear of the possibility of losing a battery—a fear which throughout paralysed the effect of the Servian guns.

From this point the other height, which had been stormed the day before, was to be visited, as the Prince wanted himself to choose a position for a battery which had already been sent on there. On the way we made a halt to refresh the inner man. The Prince was in high good humour, and told us a good deal about his stay at the court of King Milan, who was also, perhaps, at this moment sitting on a rock amongst the hills yonder and lunching, though, no doubt, in a less cheerful mood. The Prince joked about the fact that it had only transpired that morning that he and his staff had been sleeping on dynamite for two nights—a discovery which had at first caused a little uneasiness. The case was this. The house in which the Prince had put up was owned by a railway contractor who was superintending the laying of the line at Zaribrod. The dynamite which he required for his blastings had been stowed in the cellar of his house, and the old man who had been left in sole charge had only mentioned it quite incidentally. How easily one of the many bullets which made the town so unsafe on the 24th might have gone through a cellar window, struck the dynamite and blown up the whole headquarters! Like the Prince, King

Milan had also lived for five days on the top of this mine without knowing it. We also talked of King Alfonso of Spain, whose grave illness had just been heard of by telegraph. I mentioned at the time, that one of my Paris friends, a doctor, who was very accurately informed of the state of the King's health, had assured me about a year ago that Alfonso was suffering from galloping consumption, and had at the very longest two years more to live. The following day we heard of his death. Many a thought was also given to our German home, and we lingered over these reminiscences until Lieutenant Taneff reported the battery ready.

It sounds monotonous if one describes over and over again what the difficulties were that the ascent of one of these hills offered to man and beast; but with this hill I must recur to them, as it was not only a case of man and beast, but a case of guns. If we had trouble enough to climb up it, the batteries had ten times as much. Forty to fifty infantrymen had to assist in dragging or pushing each gun, and the job was one of the most difficult I have ever seen. Yet it was done, and indeed in a surprisingly short space of time, for the battery only took twenty minutes more in the ascent than we. The top of the hill was the scene of yesterday's hand-to-hand fight, and the dead were still lying about unburied. I counted them, and arrived at the remarkable result that there were 83 Servians to 9 Bulgarians; and though an officer assured me, later on,

that I had overlooked a spot where five Bulgarians were lying close together, the proportion of 14 to 83 is still very strange, all the more as the Bulgarians were the attacking party. About half the Servians had been killed by bullet-wounds; the other half, and most of the Bulgarians, bore bayonet wounds. I may as well mention here that the Bulgarians ascribe their successes in storming in part to the fact that they always keep the *bayonet fixed*, whilst the Servians, as is also the case in Germany, wear their bayonet as a side-arm, and only fix it when an attack or defence is imminent. The Bulgarian soldiers pretend that this simple evolution always took the Servians so long that they were able to rush upon them at the moment of performing it, therefore when they were partially disarmed. I am bound to say, however, that this explanation did not strike me as being very convincing.

Whilst we were still on the hill top, a deep black cloud, in shape like a huge ironclad, with a mighty rainbow, came drifting across from the Servian hills, and what the enemy's guns, threatening across from the other side, had not been able to accomplish, was done by this fantastic marine monster. The Prince's staff retired in the greatest haste to Zaribrod, not, however, before being overtaken by the rain and thoroughly drenched. Luckily the downpour only lasted a quarter of an hour, and the raincloud soon made way for the sun, the setting of which promised us fine weather for the

next day, to our great delight. There was nothing we needed more for the 26th, as the crossing of the frontier had been definitely decided upon, and we believed that the Servians would oppose our march into their country with all their might, and that a big battle, one perhaps decisive of the whole campaign, was before us.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM ZARIBROD TO PIROT.

Crossing the frontier—An unexecuted cavalry attack—Prince Alexander and his staff surprised by shell-fire—The capture of Pirot deferred to November 27—The citadel of Pirot blown up—Deficient night quarters—The battle of Pirot—Its occupation—The Servian army dispersed.

AT 8 o'clock on the morning of November 26, the Bulgarian forces occupied the following positions. The main column under Colonel Nikolajeff at Zaribrod, its advanced troops at the Nissawa Bridge, which had been blown up by the Servians; a right column consisting of sixteen battalions and two batteries, under Major Gutscheff, in the mountains, with orders to march on Pirot along the mountain paths running parallel with the high-road; a left column, under Captain Popoff, which by this time must have crossed the frontier near Trn and which had received orders to draw towards the main column in the direction of Pirot as much as circumstances would admit, and to support the left wing of the main body. We had facing us four Servian divisions, and besides there was a rumour that detachments of General Leshjanin's Timok division were on the march from

Widdin to reinforce the main army. The Bulgarian main column under Nikolajeff would amount to about 30,000 men, so that the Bulgarians, with Gutscheff's 16,000 and Popoff's 9,000 men, had at their disposal a total of about 55,000 men for their attack on Pirot. Of these, however, Popoff's 9,000 men only effected their junction with the main body on the second day, whilst Gutscheff's 16,000 men were unable to take part in the actual battle at all. Opposed to the Bulgarians were four Servian divisions, the strength of which, after their losses at Slivnitza, can only be estimated at 40,000 men, so that they were certainly equal in numbers to the attacking force. They had the advantage of being the defenders, which, however, was more than compensated for by the enthusiasm and confidence of success amongst the Bulgarians, compared with the general depression of the Servian troops.

Although the Servians fell back before the Bulgarian van almost without offering any resistance, the advance was made very slowly at first, as the hilly ground had to be carefully reconnoitred and as it also took a considerable time to get our batteries down from the positions in the mountains. As the Servians had blown up the standing bridge across the Nissawa, a temporary one had to be built, which caused some delay. Meanwhile the Prince crossed the river with his staff to the south of the bridge, and took up his position on a small wooded hillock, from which, however, not very much

could be seen. This much at any rate we could make out, that the Servians had given up barring our entry into their country. Looking back we saw a long and broad black ribbon stretching from the Nissawa Bridge to Zaribrod, and disappearing in the town. This ribbon was the leading division of our main column. At half-past eleven the solid mass became animated. We saw the ribbon moving along forward, as if driven by an invisible force. The advance had commenced. So in order to be the first to greet his troops on Servian soil, the Prince galloped on to the first Servian village, where he placed himself with his staff in front of the Custom House, facing the Bulgarian and Servian frontier posts, which stood peacefully side by side. At the doors of the houses sticks with white handkerchiefs had been stuck in the ground as a sign of submission, and here and there a peasant was peeping out of window. On the whole the inhabitants were less timid than I had found them on similar occasions before, and soon an old woman approached and offered the Prince a glass of wine. The acceptance of it resulted in other people following and providing the staff as well, so that we were able, immediately on crossing the frontier, to drink 'To the capture of Pirot' with Servian wine. And now our infantry was approaching, headed by the bands, and with ringing cheers they marched past the Prince. The bands had wheeled off and were playing the 'Djumi-Maritza,' which had so often led the Bulgarians

to victory, and behind the Prince a semicircle was formed of the officers of the staff and the inhabitants of the village, who, getting more and more bold, were now streaming in from all sides. It was a scene which could not fail to impress itself on one's memory.

Who would have thought of this ten days ago! Then everything seemed lost, and to-day we were in the land of the Servians, who seemed not even to possess enough strength to defend their own soil. *Sic transit gloria mundi*, and rarely more deservedly so!

However much the Prince was pleased at the enthusiasm of his troops, he could not think of letting the whole long procession go by him, and after the first battalions had marched past, we trotted on to reach the head of the column again. We had not ridden far when we heard the firing of guns, the first on that day, and saw orderlies galloping to the rear in wild haste. A rise in the ground stretching right across the valley hid our view forward, but from the reports we heard, in the plain of Pirot, which only opened up behind the high ground, the enemy's cavalry, to the strength of three or four regiments, was drawn up and appeared to challenge the Bulgarian cavalry. At the first view of the Servian horsemen our advanced guard, consisting of the Prince's body-guard, had sent back messengers to the officer commanding the cavalry brigade, which unfortunately had been kept rather far in rear. However, they now moved to the front with all the greater speed,

and the fire of our advanced guard battery seemed to electrify all our troops. The infantry increased its pace to the utmost; two batteries left the road and set off at a trot, and now to the right of them appeared the cavalry brigade at full gallop with foaming horses. What was going on in front? Amongst the men the majority did not know, but everyone felt that 'something was up,' and hurried on as fast as possible to be 'in it.' As a military 'tableau' that moment was certainly the finest of the whole campaign, and the three lines of infantry, cavalry, and artillery, rushing along side by side, reminded one of those old battle pictures, when there were neither skirmishing lines nor shells at 5,000 yards, but where the combatants went for one another with drawn swords. It was only a short glimpse that I had of those moving masses—two minutes later we were on the height ourselves. In front of us the plain of Pirot stretched away, flanked to the right and left by mountain chains, at the foot of which a few villages were lying to the right, whilst to the left and parallel with them a low ridge ran along to within two or three miles of Pirot, covered with vineyards and single trees. Before us, though at a long distance, lay Pirot, with its white churches, shining out bright in the sunlight; the background was formed by high ridges, rising up steep behind the town. Immediately in front of us was a flat hollow, like a huge drill ground, and on it, at a distance of about a mile and a half, long, motionless

black lines, the enemy's cavalry. One could not conceive a place more favourable for cavalry action than this, and as our horsemen, on reaching the plain, opened out into attack formation, we thought we noticed a forward movement of the Servian cavalry as well. The greatest excitement prevailed; every glass was levelled at the enemy's horse. Are they going to accept the challenge or not? The movement amongst the Servians continued, the regiments kept on changing formation, but whilst our cavalry was steadily galloping towards their goal, the Servians never advanced in the least. Once again it seemed as if the Servians were going to ride out to meet the attack, but it was a mistake; they wheeled to the right-about and retired along the road to Pirot. And from the road little pale blue puffs of smoke rose up, and we saw that the Servian cavalry had only made way for its infantry, which at once opened fire on the Bulgarian horsemen. Had the latter been quite fresh, they might have made the attempt to attack the Servian infantry, all the more as they did not appear to be very numerous, and it could be assumed that they would not stand very firmly. But our cavalry had been brought up at the last moment from the rearguard —which certainly was not its proper place—had covered the entire distance at top speed, then had a tremendously long gallop over deep ploughed land, in short, they were so exhausted, the horses so pumped out, that a further attack was out of the question. The brigade therefore

turned to the right-about and retired, losing several men and about thirty horses on the way from the enemy's infantry fire. And so we were deprived of the rare spectacle of a cavalry attack on a larger scale; our infantry once more formed the head of the column, and the Servians retired before them without attempting the slightest resistance. Our troops steadily advanced, there was no sign of the enemy anywhere, so that we really began to think that we had *over*-estimated the Servian opposition. Prince Francis, Riedesel, and Menges had followed the infantry along the road, and as the Prince himself rode along the low ridge to the left, so as to have a better view of the operations, the staff was separated on this occasion. We were now accompanied, however, by the Foreign Minister, Tsanoff, who had just arrived from Sofia, and the representative of the '*Agence Havas*,' my cheerful and amiable colleague Georges Fillion, with whom, when there was nothing else to be done, I usually concocted means for making Germany and France united heart and soul. We had made great progress in this, and it is rather a pity that the war did not last any longer, as we should probably have settled this most important question in European politics for good and all.

We breakfasted at a solitary house, and then continued our 'promenade' towards Pirot. Several battalions of Eastern Roumelian infantry marched with us through the vineyards, to the right of us we saw our

main body advancing along the high road—of the Servians there was not a trace. So we trotted past the Roumeliots, and soon found ourselves with the advanced guard. About two or three miles before reaching Pirot, the height on which we had been riding gradually descends into the plain, and the town lay immediately in front of us. It was not considered advisable to ride on any further, so we dismounted to await the arrival of our infantry. No one had any doubt that we should enter Pirot that day, and that the Prince would be able to remain true to the custom acquired at Zaribrod, of sleeping in King Milan's bed. With our glasses we went 'house hunting,' and the one chose this, the other that house as his future residence. The most sought after were several large houses near the church, as they were suspected of being the abodes of the priests, who in Bulgaria also, or rather in this case one should say Servia, are popularly supposed to keep the best '*cuisine*.' We were disturbed in this harmless pastime by Kristoff, the Prince's martial-looking henchman, whose gigantic moustaches and gorgeous costume had so impressed one of the Servian prisoners at Zaribrod, that he approached him with the respectful question, 'Art thou, O my lord, the commander of the terrible?' Kristoff, who, though not the 'commander of the terrible,' was gifted with the eye of a hawk, came up to me and asked me for my glass. He looked through it for a moment straight ahead, and then said calmly, 'There is a big Servian battery in

front of us.' 'Where?' Everybody looked in the direction indicated without being able to make out the battery. 'I see it quite plainly,' said Kristoff, and, as if the Servians were anxious to bear him out, a tremendous cloud of smoke suddenly rose up before us, about a mile off. It certainly was a battery, and moreover a very strong one, of at least twenty guns. But not only that, this battery *fired*, but, with very deplorable deviation from all former habits, it did so straight into our group. In front of us, to the right and to the left, shells were pitching, and, before we had time to realise what had happened, another battery, suddenly showing up on the heights in our left flank, sent its projectiles buzzing over our heads. Clearly this was not a place to 'build huts' in, and neither the pretty view of Pirot, nor the hoped-for priestly dinners, prevented us from carrying out a retrograde movement with the greatest promptitude. We were just in time, for the Servians were beginning to fire shrapnel shell from the left, and their long-range rifles began to make themselves felt as well. The affair was not a pleasant one, but it was a great blessing that the Servians had shown us their positions so soon, for it really might have come about that we, lulled by the quiet of the whole day, had marched quite cheerfully straight into their batteries. Of course it was now all up with our entry into Pirot for this day. It was already half-past three, therefore too late to begin a serious action, and that we could plainly see, from the situation,

would not be spared us. Prince Alexander accordingly at once sent orders to Colonel Nikolajeff not to let himself be drawn into any serious engagement, but merely to push on his troops as far as it was possible without meeting much opposition. Everything else had to be left for the morrow, and although we had to renounce our hope of taking Pirot this day, still we could rest satisfied with its results, which at least represented the gain of a considerable amount of ground forward. Moreover, we hoped to be able to resume the offensive on the following day under more favourable conditions, as Gutscheff's and Popoff's co-operation might be counted upon.

The Servians, having once commenced their fire, kept it up with the greatest energy, without, however, doing us any great damage. The projectiles mostly pitched to the left of the high-road, only a few reaching the road itself. On arriving there, we came up again with Prince Francis, Riedesel, and Menges, who had watched our being peppered on the height, and who had also come in for some of the shell that had gone over our heads. Nikolajeff and Petroff were there too, so that the dispositions for the following day could be made at once. News had been received from Gutscheff and Popoff, and we heard that they were both continuing their march. It was impossible to give them any further instructions from here, as we could not know under what conditions their advance was being made,

whether they would come across the enemy, and, if so, in what strength. The orders to the main column for the next day were, first to take the heights on our left flank, and then to make the attack on Pirot from these and from the road.

By the time this was agreed upon, darkness had set in, and the question now arose where the Prince and his staff could put up for the night. A village to the right of the road did not seem to offer much, and was besides quite in the line of fire; a bivouac promised still less comfort, as, owing to the proximity of the enemy, no fires could be lit; and so it was decided to establish the headquarters at a 'Khan' about four miles to the rear, which we had noticed during our march. On the way there I discovered my carriage on the high-road, which proved to be a particularly lucky find by-and-by. As we were riding along, discussing the events of the day, the whole country around was suddenly lit up by a blaze; a glance backwards showed us a huge sheet of fire rising high up in the sky, remaining there a few seconds, and then collapsing. Then utter darkness again prevailed, and it was several seconds before a dull report was heard. The unexpected suddenness and grandeur of this event had something awe-inspiring. That it was an explosion was at once clear to everyone. But where had it taken place? Was it accidental or intentional, and what had been its effect? How very much one can be mistaken in judging the

distance in any such occurrence, was proved by the various estimates which were formed. Some thought a small mill, only a few hundred yards behind us, had been blown up; others laid the scene of the explosion in the position of our batteries, and others again in Pirot, distant five or six miles. The latter supposition was the right one, for, as was later reported, the Servians had left the town on the appearance of some Bulgarian cavalry scouts, blowing up the citadel with dynamite at the same time. The explosion only wounded two Bulgarians, but was supposed to have killed and wounded forty of the retiring Servians—an assertion which I believe to be erroneous, as I could find neither dead bodies nor traces of blood on visiting the citadel later on.

On reaching the 'Khan,' still under the impression of the explosion, it became evident that the Prince's headquarters would not be lodged there in a very princely way. The few rooms of the 'Khan' were filled with wounded, in part Servians, who were being attended to by the doctors; and with the greatest difficulty two little rooms were obtained for the headquarters staff, their entire furniture consisting of a table, a wooden bedstead, and a couple of benches.

It was only after the Prince had made his entry into this hovel, that the sad discovery was made that no one had thought of getting any provisions, and that there was not the very least thing worthy or even capable of

being eaten, in the house. Luckily I had some provisions in my carriage; nothing very good, and not much of it—still it was better than nothing at all. Half a dozen loaves of bread, half a yard of sausage, a smoked tongue, tea, sugar—that was all I could offer, and besides this a knife, a fork, and a tumbler. Furthermore I discovered in the carriage a most precious article in the shape of a packet of candles, so that we were even able to dine on a festively lit-up table—at least to the extent of two candles. As one has to put up with anything on active service, this did very well, but it was only when the tea, so indispensable in this country, was brought in after 'dinner,' that the real difficulties commenced. It was a matter of course that the Prince should have the sole use of the tumbler, but what were the remainder of us to do? There was not a single glass, cup, pot, or drinking utensil of any kind to be found in the 'Khan'; but finally one of the servants discovered the half of a broken soup-plate, and proposed this as a general drinking-cup. At first there was universal shaking of heads, and a minute and suspicious inspection of that product of the potter's art, as if it were a case of examining some piece of Moabite antiquity; finally a unanimous declaration that this plate could very well be used as a tea-cup, and that its discovery should be considered a meritorious deed. And it really answered better than we had expected: the loving cup, I mean to say the soup-plate, went the round of the

table to everyone's satisfaction—a proof that 'where there is a will there is a way,' especially where 'necessity' lends a hand.

After the feeding came the question of how to sleep, and a couple of rugs were found somewhere for the Prince, the one to cover himself up with, the other to make the wooden bed less hard, for the room containing that piece of furniture was intended for the Prince. In the other room, through which one had to pass to get to the Prince, a bundle of hay was thrown, and on this Prince Francis, Riedesel, Menges, Winaroff, Uwalieff, and I stretched ourselves, the whole apartment measuring only about 16 feet by 10. After having been on horseback all day one can even sleep on such a couch as this, and, indeed, we should have slept very well if we had only not been disturbed. But no sooner had we dropped off to sleep than sounds of extreme dissatisfaction were heard on our right flank, where Menges had lain down alongside of the door leading into the passage. He had cunningly calculated, that lying nearest the wall, he could only be molested from one side. '*Mal lui en prit!*' Every one of the individuals, wounded or otherwise, who were groping about the 'Khan' during the night and looking for some resting-place, tried to get into our room too, and in doing so naturally 'stepped' straight on to Menges' legs. After a sentry had been placed at the door to prevent the recurrence of such deplorable incidents, we thought everything had

been done to ensure our rest. But as soon as we were once more fast asleep, a loud scream was heard from the very centre of the room. A light having been struck, it turned out that the Adjutant-General Petroff, anxious to speak to the Prince during the night, had stumbled over us in passing and fallen on the top of Prince Francis, which had caused the latter to utter that cry of alarm. There was no peace even after this, for now an infernal row began outside the building. On inquiry we found that Slaweikoff's Bashi-Bazouks, who were camping out close to the 'Khan,' were engaged in hunting a tame pig, which ended in the animal being taken and killed under our window. I cannot deny that there was some very hard swearing in our room that night, and especially as the sport in question was not much appreciated. We thought better of it, however, the next morning, when the Bashi-Bazouks brought us some 'kibab' (small pieces of pork roasted on sticks), a most palatable and excellent dish.

Without much regret we left the old 'Khan' on the morning of November 27. Many things were possible, but *there* we should not have returned under any circumstances. A very superficial ablution—washing utensils were of course also wanting in that model hostelry—a simple breakfast off the above-mentioned kibab; and away we went on the high-road towards Pirot. At nine o'clock we met, about half way, Captain Winaroff, who had preceded us and who was now re-

turning from our advanced troops bringing excellent news. It seems that when, the first thing in the morning, our troops were preparing to attack the heights on the left according to their instructions, they made the startling discovery that they were already in the hands of Bulgarians. It was high time too, for our batteries were just on the point of opening fire on these heights, where our shells would have hit Bulgarians and not Servians. This change of the situation was owing to the junction of Popoff, who, following the sound of guns, had arrived the evening before from Trn, and had driven the Servians off the heights that same night. Thus we were not only saved the first part of our day's work, but the attacking force had been strengthened by 9,000 men. Winaroff further reported that the Servians had evacuated the town of Pirot, which was now occupied by the Bulgarian van, but that the heights to the right of the town, and also a strong position to the left of it, were still held by the enemy. As Winaroff was making his report the Bulgarian artillery was beginning to fire, and immediately afterwards the infantry also came into action. When we had advanced as far as our artillery position near the road, we were able to see how the action had been developed. Towards nine o'clock a Servian division had attacked Pirot, and had, indeed, succeeded in ejecting our weak advanced guard. Exaggerated and fantastic accounts have been given how ferocious the fight in the streets had been

on that occasion, how Bulgarians and Servians had fought hand to hand with terrible exasperation. Now, in reality it was not by any means as bad as that. Our troops on occupying Pirot had hardly any fighting to do, and on being driven out again now, though holding out as long as possible, they could not dream of engaging in a hand to hand struggle, as they were much too weak in numbers. Just as we arrived at our batteries—it was about eleven o'clock—we saw our skirmishers advancing on Pirot to retake the town. The Servians, who had fortified themselves at its near entrance, directed a hot fire against the attacking party, but were ultimately unable to hold out against that of our infantry, supported as it was by the artillery; following close upon the heels of the retiring Servians they occupied Pirot a second time. In doing so of course there was some firing in the streets, but never to the extent which would justify one speaking of a 'street fight.' The engagement was a more serious one on the Servian right, where the Roumelian division was commencing the attack from about the same place where the headquarters staff had been fired upon so unexpectedly by the enemy's artillery the day before. They met with very obstinate resistance, especially on the left flank, where the Servians had occupied a group of low hills; this was not only proved by the violent firing, but by the number of wounded who were coming in from that part. Numerous Servian prisoners were

also brought on to the road to be taken on to Zaribrod. Up to noon the action at this point was progressing very slowly, as our artillery, having to fix its attention on Pirot, could only support the Roumeliots very slightly. About this time a couple of Servian batteries came into action against our artillery, but from a less favourable position than the one they had held yesterday, which they had given up from fear of being cut off. They were not able to hold out long against the fire of the Bulgarian guns, and soon had to retire towards the heights which command the entrance to the pass through which the road to Nish re-enters the mountains from the Pirot plain. On the right flank also some firing took place in the hills, which was only maintained in a desultory way by the Bulgarians, as our plan was not to cut off the road to Knajewatz before we were assured that Gutscheff had arrived there. In that case we should have tried to force yet more Servians back along that road, where they would simply have run straight into the arms of Gutscheff's men, and would in all probability have been taken prisoners or completely annihilated. Nothing, however, was seen or heard of that division.

At half-past twelve the action on our left flank assumed a most violent character, and the Roumeliots advanced in broad skirmishing lines to the attack. Two of the previously mentioned low heights were taken by assault after a fierce fusillade, upon which the

Servians retired towards the high-road, pluckily defending their ground foot by foot. Following this retrograde movement the Roumeliots, meanwhile assisted by Popoff, made a complete wheel to the right, which, however, could only be carried out very slowly. As they were still in the midst of this movement, fighting steadily, two batteries suddenly appeared on the hills flanking Pirot and opened fire at once, thus taking the Roumeliots in the flank and almost in rear. We were not a little surprised, for thinking that this region was quite clear of Servians, we could not imagine what these batteries could be. That Servian guns should dare approach our fighting line so close was a thing which had never yet happened, and therefore we could not believe at first that they were really Servian guns. Had Gutscheff already arrived and pushed on his batteries beyond Pirot? In this case he would be bowling over our own men. Instantly aides-de-camp were sent off to the front to find out what these batteries were, and at the same time orders were sent to the commander of the cavalry brigade, stationed at the right flank, to make an attempt to take those guns. The brigade instantly moved off, and received on the way the confirmation that it was indeed the Servians that we had to deal with. Our artillery at once directed their whole fire on the Servian guns, which, however, on this occasion continued to shoot at our infantry with very commendable courage and great stubbornness, without

paying any attention to our artillery fire. The advance of our cavalry was stopped by boggy and impassable ground, but did good in so far that it showed the Servian batteries the danger of their situation so clearly that they limbered up and disappeared along the Nish road. They certainly had behaved exceedingly well, and had earned the admiration of the Bulgarians by their boldness. Prince Alexander himself told me, whilst the batteries were still in action, not to forget to mention specially in my telegram the courage and daring displayed by the Servians on this occasion. I did this naturally without dreaming that the commander of these batteries was the former Prussian artillery officer, Colonel Horstig, as we heard two days later through Servian flags of truce. I, for my part, would rather not have found Germans on that side; but once there, I was glad that they had at least fought bravely—Horstig, as well as a Major Sturm, who fell in a fight at Trn. In the Bulgaro-Roumelian army there was, besides the Germans already mentioned, only a Captain von Mach, of the Roumelian militia, who distinguished himself during the attack on Pirot.

Meanwhile it was three o'clock, and if we wanted to take not only Pirot, but the surrounding heights, which commanded the town, no time was to be lost. Prince Alexander therefore gave orders to push on with all possible strength. Our left flank, having completed its change of front, marched towards the Nish road, our

centre advanced through Pirot, throwing back the Servian main force partly off the Nish, partly on the Knajewatz road. The battle of Pirot was over, the Servian army was not only beaten once more but scattered, and had only escaped complete annihilation thanks to an accident, the non-appearance of Gutscheff. That division had to overcome great difficulties, owing to the nature of the ground, and therefore naturally advanced more slowly than the main corps marching along a smooth road. Nevertheless they would have arrived in time, and have captured the Servians, as Captain Bendereff, Gutscheff's chief of the staff for this expedition, has assured me, if they had not encountered Servian troops in the mountains on the second day, the 27th. These defended one position after another in the difficult mountainous ground, and at the time when some of the officers at headquarters grumbled at Gutscheff's idleness he was perpetually fighting. Still, the approach of that division was not without some influence on the course of the engagement, as was said by several Servian officers later on, since the Servians only decided upon evacuating Pirot when they felt themselves threatened from the Knajewatz road. In the course of the afternoon Gutscheff effected his junction with Panitza's brigade, which had hitherto been operating alone, and which now became the advanced guard of the division, entering Pirot towards evening.

'To-night a dinner in Pirot in celebration of the victory,' Baron Riedesel called out to me about four o'clock. 'His Highness invites you to it; let us hope it will be better than the one yesterday.' As everything was pretty quiet around by this time, I started off for Pirot at once, followed by my carriage, so as to have daylight for the 'house-hunting,' which when carried out from a distance had been so rudely interrupted the day before. On my way I came across one of the volunteers of the 'Red Cross Society,' who had been shot through the back, and whom I took in my carriage to the hospital in the town. Arrived there I met Kaufmann, who was just discussing the question of lodgings with a native of Pirot. According to this man's opinion there was only one house in Pirot worthy of receiving us—that of Dr. Valenta, 'the father of the pretty young lady with whom Prince Alexander used to dance at the state balls at Sofia.' The very thing we wanted. We had ourselves conducted thither at once, and found that the native had indeed given us excellent advice, for which he was right royally rewarded. Dr. Valenta and 'the pretty young lady' had fled from the Bulgarians; but this was made up for by most comfortable rooms, European furniture, real beds, and servants who seemed delighted to take us in, since our presence was a guarantee against any disturbance during the night. No sooner had we mentioned eatables, than a table was placed before us with every kind of excellently pre-

pared dishes; in short, we could not possibly have been better off. This excess of good fortune gave rise to sinister thoughts. 'Kaufmann,' I said, 'take care; things will go wrong yet. This house is much too good for us; you will see that the Prince will come here himself.' However, the Prince did not come that evening, as he had changed his dispositions at the last moment, and had taken up his quarters for the night in a village outside Pirot, so that the promised 'victory dinner' did not take place after all. This first night in Pirot was to be a very uneasy one, not so much for me as for the inhabitants of the town. Already, in the course of the evening, several people came to me and begged my protection against the excesses of the soldiers and against plundering riff-raff in general; a distinction which, as I found out later, I owed to our hosts, who had circulated the rumour that I was the Commandant of Pirot, so as to insure greater security for their house. How could I help these people on a dark night, and in a town where at every step one risked falling into mud-holes up to one's waist? I advised them to look for the real 'Natchalnik' and went to bed.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN PIROT.

The truth about the sacking of Pirot—Turned out—Arrival of Count Khevenhüller—The enforced truce, and the feeling in the Bulgarian army—Conditions in Servia.

ON awaking early on November 28, the people in the house told us that the town had been pillaged during the night; our house was also going to be sacked, but the marauders had beaten a hasty retreat on being informed that the 'Natchalnik' lived here. A little later, however (the servants had remained up all night) they had come back and carefully studied the visiting cards which Kaufmann and I had nailed up at the gate-post, so that we could be found more easily if we were being looked for. After a short consultation they had torn down the cards and taken them away; an hour later, however, two men had returned and carefully nailed them up again. Indeed, we afterwards found the cards not quite on the original spot, and I cannot explain the 'Odyssey' which they had undergone in any other way than that the pillagers had looked upon these cards as strange, uncanny objects, which they did not trust,

and which they therefore were anxious to rid themselves of.

On this occasion I should like to tell the truth, the real truth, about this sacking, which was very deplorable in itself, but which has been represented in some quarters with perhaps still more deplorable exaggeration. Our troops were in a high state of excitement after the fight, as the Servians had not only blown up the citadel, but had laid mines under the high road, which were luckily discovered before the explosion took place. The soldiers looked upon the laying of these mines—wrongly as I believe—as a mean action, contrary to the law of nations, and were therefore in a mood which lent itself only too readily to excesses and reprisals. Added to this, the troops were camping in dense masses close to the town, so that it was an easy thing for many soldiers to steal away singly into the town. I believe that they originally came with the harmless intention of buying provisions; when, however, they saw that sacking was already going on, they no doubt joined in. Now, who were the people who began the pillage in the first instance? Simply native rabble of Pirot itself, and rapacious peasants who had come in from the neighbouring villages. These people threw themselves on the houses of the rich inhabitants, and stole out of many of them all that they could carry away, and many of the soldiers followed the example which had been set. Now, this is very much

to be regretted, but in common justice it must be put on record, that, at the most, one-twentieth only of the damage done can be put down to the soldiers. Another circumstance plays a part in the pillage; the town of Pirot possesses a very mixed population, consisting of Servians and Bulgarians, and many a Bulgarian, who now thought he had the upper hand, tried to avenge himself on personal enemies, and to put a forcible end to any old standing feud. In the main street of Pirot things looked rather bad, and especially the tobacconists' shops had been thoroughly cleaned out; a man had also been killed in his house by the mob who were breaking in; but that is all that can be said about the pillage. If the town presented a picture of such terrible devastation, it was principally owing to the windows of every house, especially in the main street, being broken almost without any exception, not, however, through any fault of the Bulgarians, but in consequence of the blowing up of the citadel by the Servians, which shook the whole of Pirot in the most terrible manner. In the fantastic accounts of the pillaging of Pirot, Panitza's 'Brigand Brigade' has been assigned one of the principal parts, all the damage done being put down to those Macedonians. They did indeed take part in the affair, but in the following manner. As Panitza marched into Pirot in the evening, he came across some pillaging inhabitants, whom he caught, to the number of about thirty, and placed

face downwards in a row on the pavement. Two brigands stepped up on either side of each of the recumbent figures, and having bared the part of their bodies which faced upwards, gave them a tremendous 'rope's-ending' all round. At the same time Panitza sent pickets into the town which drove away the plundering mob, and so it was the brigands that restored peace and order, and made life and property safe again. It was said that they had done this with particular zeal, as they had been rather hurt by the idea of outsiders meddling with what they considered to be their especial business. At the first news of the disorder which had broken out at Pirot, officers were also sent from headquarters, who put an end to the excesses in a short time, as far as was possible in utter darkness, and in a town with narrow, crooked, and interminable streets. One might certainly reproach the Bulgarian commanders with not having foreseen these occurrences, and with not having made their preparations accordingly; that this was neglected no one deplored more than Prince Alexander himself, still one does not invariably think of *everything*, and there are other places too where occasionally the stable-door is only shut after the horse has been stolen. If one cannot quite say '*tant de bruit pour une omelette*,' yet a good deal more noise has certainly been made over this than the whole affair was worth.

From this dissertation I will return to my lodgings, which were not destined to be mine much longer.

Whilst I was still dressing, the Prince's aide-de-camp, Stojanoff, came into my room. I was half pleased, half sad at my prophetic gift, which had enabled me to foretell this the night before. Of course I was at once quite sure in my own mind as to the meaning of Stojanoff's appearance, and called out to him, 'Only give me a quarter of an hour to dress.' 'No such hurry,' was the reply; 'the Prince won't be here for another half-hour. Anyhow I have procured other quarters for you; you are to go with us into the house opposite.' And so I did; the transit was rapidly accomplished, and we found ourselves quite well housed over the way, where we shared two rooms with Winaroff, Uwalieff, Stojanoff, and Taneff; whilst the Prince, his brother, Riedesel, and Menges, turned into the 'Valenta Palace' which we had evacuated. 'Palace' is, perhaps, an exaggerated term, for after all it was, though European in style, according to our lights only a plain and modestly furnished house; however, Pirot could not boast of its equal. Later on I read in Servian accounts that Prince Alexander had driven his vandalism to the length of destroying Dr. Valenta's splendid natural history museum, and I can quite understand that the world of savants must have heard of this with profound regret. Now, so as to administer some consolation to those afflicted by this, and to prevent the destruction of this 'Natural History Museum' being spoken of a thousand years hence as that of the Alexandrian

Library is spoken of to-day, let me state, to the best of my knowledge, what the said 'museum' consisted of. There were about ten or twelve small stuffed animals, squirrels, mice, rats, small birds, &c., and in addition a large eagle, who spread his wings over the spot where Prince Alexander used to sit at meals. As a 'picture' this was undoubtedly very fine, but there was one drawback, the museum, I mean to say the eagle, smelt very strongly of arsenic, so that one day orders were given for his removal. He was deposited in the courtyard, where he remained for two days quite undisturbed; one fine day, however, he had disappeared. Where he has flown to, the gods alone can tell, but he has certainly not arrived at the Prince's palace at Sofia. The other little stuffed beasts were put on the top of some cupboard, where they probably remained. That is the whole history of the barbarous destruction of a 'Natural History Museum.'

I was firmly convinced that the Bulgarians would employ the 28th of November in continuing the pursuit with vigour, and it seemed to me as good as certain that two or three days would suffice to give the Servian army the 'coup-de-grâce.' My first and most natural question on meeting M. Menges at the new headquarters about eight o'clock was: 'When do we attack?' 'Not yet,' was the surprising answer; and I then heard that during the night a letter had arrived from the Servian headquarters, from the Austrian Minister, Count Khevenhüller, in which he begged Prince Alexander to grant him an

interview at once, as he had to make His Highness a communication from his Emperor. The letter said nothing further, but it was quite sufficient! A foreign diplomatist at headquarters, and of all people Count Khevenhüller! We all knew that it could only be an attempt to save the Servian army, and to rob the Bulgarians of the fruits of their victories. The Prince, Karaweloff, all Bulgarians, however, were firmly resolved to offer the most determined resistance to any such attempt, and to defend the advantages which they had obtained over the Servian soldiers against the Austrian diplomatist as well. If Khevenhüller brought proposals of peace which could be accepted, he was welcome; but if, as we rightly assumed, it was a case of an untenable truce, then he had come in vain—that was the universal opinion.

At half-past eight Khevenhüller reached the headquarters, and at half-past nine Prince Alexander had consented to cease hostilities without any conditions whatever.

How had this been possible—how had the Prince's firm resolve been overcome in one short hour? That shall be explained at length in another place; here let me describe the effect which this truce, enforced by the Austrian envoy, produced in the Bulgarian headquarters and in the entire army. A feeling of indignation seized hold of everyone. Nothing had been done when the Servians began making war on their neighbours with-

out any provocation, without the shadow of a pretext; and now, when a nation, which had been fallen upon in so dastardly a manner, had beaten off the attack with such unexampled vigour, had defeated the aggressors and all but exterminated them, the diplomacy of the very State which was mainly responsible for this war appeared only to bar the way to the victorious army—to cheat it of the fruits of its successes. This feeling was all the more bitter as the Bulgarians owed their successes only to their own national strength; for if the Servian army was now lying at their feet, whom had they to thank for it? A young Prince, schooled in Germany, their young officers, lacking all experience! Those men, Nikolajeff, Gutscheff, Panoff, Popoff, Bendereff, Panitza, had driven the Servians before them everywhere; and the headquarters staff, Petroff, Paprikoff, and others, only quite lately promoted to captaincies, had planned and guided these operations so as to ensure ultimate success. Mistakes were made in plenty; frequently the grave and unpardonable mistakes of the Servians were turned to account; but in looking at the general aspect of this twenty days' war, it can surely not be denied that the Bulgarian army had done great things, and that it had acquired every claim to high esteem. Bravery and military worth usually command recognition and sympathy in the case of other nations—why should this have been so different with the Bulgarians! There are riddles in history which can only be solved by freeing oneself

from certain time-honoured prejudices and by attributing far-reaching political measures not to deep-laid, statesmanlike devices, not to secret considerations hidden from the eyes of the layman, but to a factor which appears more frequently than one fancies, and which I should like to call the reverse of wisdom, or to put it shortly and undiplomatically—political stupidity.

Before, however, embarking in the intricacies of politics, I should like to describe shortly how the conditions in Servia were affected by the course of the war. As soon as the declaration of war had been made and the invasion by the Servian army had taken place, the same symptoms which always recur on similar occasions were visible; the internal squabbles were stopped, the dispute about the utility and justification of the war ceased, and the army went on its march, to victory as was hoped, accompanied by the unanimous enthusiasm of the people. When the first news came in from the seat of war, the Servian capital broke out in rejoicings over the victories. All along the line the Servian forces had been successful. They felt sure of the final result. Already it began to be stated here and there, with considerable assurance, that Sofia was in the hands of the Servians. Then again it was said the King would hold his entry there to-day, to-morrow, the day after. Any one thinking that at least a few more days were required to bring about that result was looked upon by his compatriots as a pusillanimous creature, and if he happened

to be a foreigner, as an ignorant disagreeable personage, unfavourably disposed towards the Servians. Suddenly there was a pause. The expected bulletins of further victories were not forthcoming, and the press censor kept the whole of the independent newspapers mercilessly in his claws all the time, until the unfortunate subscribers began to despair of the Servian fortunes of war, of the capacity of their generals and of the valour of their troops. Meanwhile the whole town was talking of the Servian fights at Slivnitza. These fights were denied. It was asserted that Slivnitza was taken, or at least turned, or at the very least outflanked and surrounded, whilst a Servian division had either already entered Sofia, or at any rate had arrived at its gates. The official bulletins meanwhile became scarce, almost contradictory, and were doled out, so to say, a 'teaspoonful' at a time. One could read between the lines the endeavour to calm the public mind, to weaken the reports from the other side, and—to say as little as possible. As if in our days truth could be locked up in an office-desk! Convoys of wounded began to arrive. Their numbers increased—increased to such an extent that the scanty preparations which had been made proved to be wholly inadequate—and the wounded spoke out loudly, fearlessly, and angrily. The general mood became gloomy and despondent. There was a talk of heavy misfortune. The Servian army was reported to be beaten, thrown towards the frontier, the headquarters moved back to

Pirot, the game lost. Once more the press censor at headquarters took to contradicting. It was given out that the headquarters were at Zaribrod as before, General Leshjanin was rapidly approaching with reinforcements, the Southern army now completely united. But there was a hollow sound in those rectifying telegrams. There was too much of the Napoleonic '*Tout peut se rêtablir*' in them. Again and again the foreign newspapers were confiscated, and finally an official bulletin, bearing the ominous number 13, gave the information that the Servian army of the South was retiring, and that the headquarters had reached Servian soil again at Pirot. When the news of this retreat had reached Belgrad the general confusion became complete. Even sensible people totally denied the undoubted fact, and stuck to the vain hope that the news of the retreat was meant to cover some '*ruse de guerre*.' But they waited in vain for the news of some victory, and all the attempts of the Government to hide the real state of affairs from the people had finally to give way before the irresistible rush of truth. The Servian Government had done all that was humanly possible to disguise this, and I can assure the reader that when the first newspapers treating of the war reached us at Pirot, we were simply aghast at the audacity with which everything, positively *every*thing, in the Servian accounts had been garbled or simply invented. Many Bulgarian officers, enjoying the best of health, had been

killed; Colonel Nikolajeff even three times in three different places; the Bulgarian losses were appalling, and the prisoners taken by the Servians amounted in numbers to the total strength of the Bulgarian army. It gave one the impression that the Servian commanders had positively been unable to publish a single true word, and I have sometimes thought that perhaps the Servians had gone the way of some habitual liars, who with the best intentions in the world are no longer able to speak the truth, and end in believing their own inventions.

By this process of public instruction the people certainly only arrived at the truth slowly and by degrees. But if the Servian rulers imagined that this would prevent the outburst of public indignation they were decidedly in error, for if the country maintained an exemplary calm, even after the defeats had become known, this must be attributed to a circumstance over which the Servian Government neither had nor could have had any control. It was not King Milan and his Government who prevented the outbreak of a revolt, but Prince Alexander of Bulgaria, who refused his sanction and assistance to those Servian would-be revolutionists—not from any love for King Milan, but from well-considered political motives.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE EASTERN POLICY OF AUSTRO-HUNGARY.

Austria's attitude before and after the war—Count Khevenhüller's activity in Servia; his part in the declaration of war; his interference at Pirot—He arbitrarily exceeds his instructions—The peace of Europe endangered—What Austria should and could have done.

THIS book claims to offer something which may prove of interest to each one of its readers. It is not intended for any particular social stratum, and I believe that the conditions which are treated of in this portion are also worthy of general attention. I especially dedicate this chapter to Austrian diplomacy, and place at its head as a motto that deep saying of old Oxenstierna: *Nescis, mi fili, quanta stultitia mundus regitur.*

Either Austria has an Eastern policy, or it has not. The occupation of Bosnia and of the Herzegovina, the efforts to gain an effective influence at Belgrad, point towards the existence of such a policy; the attitude of Austrian diplomacy during the Bulgarian imbroglio, however, seems to indicate that she renounces it for the future. Whether this is done of her own free will, or whether it is the inexorable logic of her own deeds and mistakes which causes her influence in the East to slip

out of her grasp, is immaterial as far as the final result is concerned, which in either case means a weakening of her power in the East. What was Austria's position in the East before the revolt broke out at Philippopolis? She had the complete mastery in Servia, and though Bulgaria remained outside her sphere of action, politically speaking, she was closely bound to that country by the ties of commercial interests—interests which are so mighty in these days that, whether one wishes it or not, they become political factors whenever they appear in any great strength.

And what is Austria's position now? In deeply wounding and harming Bulgaria she has also shaken her influence in Servia, where the creed that salvation was only to come from Austria has lost most of its disciples. She was a bad counsellor and an insufficient protector to that small country; for, whilst allowing her to embark on the war, or at least imbuing her with the idea of doing so, she was afterwards unable to bring it to an issue in accordance with Servia's ambitious designs. It is true that she saved the Servian army from annihilation, but for this negative service she has not received much thanks, and if the political compass-needle of the Servian Government still oscillates, uncertain whether to incline towards Vienna or St. Petersburg, the one representing the great majority of the people points steadily in the direction of the Czar's capital.

How this has come about I now propose to tell. The immediate consequence of the Eastern Roumelian revolution was that Servia's greed for aggrandisement was aroused, and that she called her men to arms with the decided intention of slicing her share out of the Turkish carcass. Now, mobilising and war are two things for which money is an essential, and money was just that commodity of which there was none in Servia. As was natural, Servia addressed herself to Austria with the request for a loan, and, without making any difficulties, the '*Länderbank*,' whose close connection with the Austrian Government is well known, declared its readiness to advance 25,000,000 francs. I believe that Austria's behaviour up to then was free from reproach, for it was only natural that she should wish to put her *protégé* in a position of readiness for any one of the emergencies which at that time could not even be foreseen. Now, however, another fatal influence was beginning to make itself felt, guiding Servia's policy into channels which were destined to be dangerous for that country itself and simply disastrous for Austria and the peace of Europe. It was then that Europe heard for the first time of *Count Khevenhüller*, of his many and long interviews with King Milan, of the great influence he possessed in Servia. Simultaneously with this, there appeared in certain *Viennese* newspapers indications, at first totally disbelieved, of Servia's intention of indemnifying herself for Bulgaria's aggrandisement at the cost of

Bulgaria herself. These indications assumed more and more consistency; Servia declared by diplomatic means that she could not consent to the creation of a Great Bulgaria, and finally, as an unmistakable sign of hostile intentions, her army formed into position along the Bulgarian frontier.

I am convinced that this change was due to Count Khevenhüller's influence, and for the following reasons. When Khevenhüller was diplomatic agent at Sofia, before his transfer to Belgrad, he showed himself to be a pronounced enemy of Russia, and did everything in his power to counteract Russian influence. The aversion for the Russians almost amounted to a disease with him, and nothing could occur without Khevenhüller seeing the hand of Russia in it. If ever the appellation of 'Russophobe' could be applied to anybody it was to him. With this disposition it was no wonder that, on the outbreak of the revolt, he believed in Russia's co-operation, and particularly that he was convinced that the Prince of Bulgaria was hand-in-glove with Russia. If this view was excusable at first, it seems quite incomprehensible that Khevenhüller still believed in a secret understanding with Russia after the recall of her officers and the expelling of Prince Alexander from her army. But his fear of Russia seems to have become a very mania, rendering him blind to the plainest evidence. His whole endeavour now was to combat that 'Russian tool' which he took Bul-

garia to be, and so to counteract a further spread of Russian influence in the Balkan peninsula. The question now arises how Khevenhüller could combine these personal views and desires of his with the instructions he received from Vienna; a question which can be answered, as I believe, in assuming that Khevenhüller, for his own purposes, made the utmost use of those expressions and instructions of Count Kalnöky which were unfavourable to Bulgaria, whilst not delivering those of his chief's communications which were of a peaceful character, and tending to discourage a resort to arms with sufficient emphasis to prevent Servia from declaring war. Kalnöky's dissuasions were certainly communicated to the Servians in such a form that perhaps they were not altogether unlike an encouragement; morecver, they were probably not *very* pressing from the first. And so the war against 'Russia's tool' broke out, and Khevenhüller in his blindness was on the point of rendering his enemies the Russians the greatest possible service; for if, as was foreseen, Prince Alexander was defeated, he would have to leave Bulgaria, making a vacancy for a Russian viceroy. Now, however, the Servians were beaten, the Khevenhüller policy came to utter grief, and it was no longer a case of destroying 'Russia's tool' but of saving 'Austria's tool' from foundering. Not only Count Khevenhüller but Count Kalnöky also wished to preserve Servia, and especially Servia's king; and so Khevenhüller received orders to proceed to the Bulgarian headquarters

and to induce Prince Alexander with all the powers of persuasion to grant the Servians an armistice. He was also empowered to declare to the Prince that Austria would not allow a complete annihilation of Servia. That was the extent of his instructions, and nothing further.

How did he carry them out? At first he spoke to the Prince of the miseries of war in general, and especially of a fratricidal war; of humanity and kindred nations; of the generosity which adorns the victor, and of similar somewhat aimless topics. Then he went on to more practical ground, and tried to prove that Bulgaria had nothing to gain by a continuance of the war, as Austria would never consent to Servia being ruined. This exposition also produced no effect on Prince Alexander, who was prepared to conclude peace, but not an armistice.

The mission of the *Austrian Minister* had therefore miscarried, and his place was now taken by *Count Khevenhüller*, the private individual, who roundly declared to the Prince that on advancing any further he would find himself face to face, no longer with Servian, but with Austrian troops. He added that the Austrian forces were ready to cross the Servian frontier on the evening of November 28.

A declaration of war from Austria against Bulgaria! The Prince could not well doubt that Khevenhüller was speaking in the name of his sovereign, nor could he think of making war against Austria alone, and so the

truce was accepted, not through Austria's intervention, but because Count Khevenhüller so willed it, and did not recoil from exceeding his instructions in an unheard of manner. It was afterwards denied that Khevenhüller had threatened with a declaration of war, but I *know* that he did so, and I also know that it can be *proved*. Count Kalnöky knows it also, and yet Count Khevenhüller quietly remains Austro-Hungarian Minister at Belgrad, and it seems that the Austrian Government still has confidence in that man!

Let anyone understand this who can! Khevenhüller certainly obtained that which his Government wished, but in the manner in which he did it he endangered the peace of Europe more than it has ever been these last twenty years. Prince Alexander could, if he wished, have quietly ignored Austria's threat, he could have let himself be proclaimed King of Servia notwithstanding all menaces, and still Austria would not have crossed the frontier—because she would have been occupied elsewhere. Count Kalnöky has probably not forgotten a telegram which M. de Giers addressed to him immediately after Khevenhüller's threat of declaring war had become known, in which the Russian Chancellor told him in pretty plain words that Austria's march into Servia would tear up the pact on which the understanding between the Northern Powers was based. If in his first indignation Prince Alexander had, to revenge himself on Austria, simply capitulated to Russia, bringing her as a

peace offering, besides a promise of future obedience, a Great Bulgaria with the capitals Sofia, Philippopolis, and Belgrad, what would have become of Austria's Eastern policy, and—what is still worse—of the peace of Europe? The idea of uniting Bulgaria and Servia was at that time *no* idle fancy. Curious though it may sound, Prince Alexander's brave and wise behaviour had gained him much sympathy even in Servia, and after the battle of Pirot it would have been an easy matter for him to kindle a revolt against King Milan. There was no lack of offers, and it is more than probable that the revolt would have succeeded, all the more as the army could no longer be counted upon. Can it really be believed in Austria that Russia would not have accepted the person of Prince Alexander together with the gift of such a State, ensuring the mastery over the entire Balkan peninsula—of course with every guarantee of obedience. I have reason to believe that such a bargain would have been closed with at once, and we should have seen how far a State can be carried by the criminal wantonness of diplomatists like Khevenhüller. That the peace of Europe was preserved at that time must not be ascribed to them, nor to the so-called European concert, but solely to the small Prince of Bulgaria.

It is generally easy to blame; in this case, however, it is also easy to indicate how Austria should have acted in order to derive greater advantages from the Roumelian

revolt than Russia ever has reaped from all her Turkish wars. It is evident that no one could expect Austria to assist Bulgaria in her endeavours for a union and her disobedience towards Russia. This would have been incompatible with the existing compact, in accordance with which both countries had undertaken—Russia not to stand in the way of Austria's influence in Servia, Austria to do the same for Russia in Bulgaria; and for the rest not to disturb the existing state of affairs in the East. The part of Austria was a very simple one, and clearly dictated by her interests. No Austrian and no Hungarian will pretend that the absolute mastery of Russia south of the Danube would be desirable, his whole endeavour should therefore be used to further the formation of independent States in the Balkan peninsula, or his interests will at least tell him that he must not do anything *against* the formation of such States. Now in the autumn of 1885 Austria had the opportunity of allowing a young people, just awakened to the full sense of its national self-consciousness, to grow into such a position as is occupied by Roumania north of the Danube. Nothing more was wanted for that, than—*to do nothing*, or at the most to prevent Servia from acting rashly. With a small amount of good will this would have been perfectly easy, and Servia's interests would not even have suffered thereby. How this could be achieved would have been easily found out if King Milan had been graciously pleased to receive Mr. Grekoff, Prince

Alexander's envoy. Grekoff's mission, of the nature of which Servians and Austrians knew nothing at the time, and in fact know nothing to this day, offered the basis for an understanding very satisfactory even for Servia, of which, however, the latter and her counsellors would not hear anything, since war against 'Russia's tool' had definitely been decided upon. If Austria had understood her task at that time, and had simply done nothing, instead of assuming a hostile attitude towards the Bulgarian unification, other Powers would also have been more inclined to the doctrine of 'non-intervention,' and three States would have come into existence on the Danube—Roumania, Servia, and Bulgaria-Roumelia, who in the interest of their common object, independence, would all have turned against anyone threatening them, but who at the same time would have been so closely bound to Austria by their commercial interests, that if ever foreign influence were spoken of, it could only be that of Austria. Not to have recognised this is the sad merit of Austrian diplomacy.

I foresee that I shall be accused of representing things in a biassed light, and of being an enemy of Austro-Hungary. That I am not; I merely share, in the interests of that country, the regret of many well-informed Austrians at the errors committed by their diplomacy. And even the latter has no right to complain of me, and ought on the contrary to be grateful to me, for I have not by a long way said all that I know.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TRUCE.

Insincerity of the Servians during the negotiations—Breach of the truce by an attack on Widdin—Lame excuses—Reappearance of the Powers and Turkey—The international military commission.

WHEN Khevenhüller left Pirot no actual armistice had been concluded, but merely a truce agreed upon, which could be annulled by either side simply by firing a volley in the air; two hours after this volley hostilities might be resumed. A Servian plenipotentiary was to arrive at the Bulgarian headquarters for the purpose of concluding a regular armistice; it seemed, however, as if the Servians were in no great hurry about it. On the first day we merely heard that the King had appointed Colonel Milowanowitch to be the plenipotentiary, but it required the most earnest and urgent representations before he deigned to put in an appearance at the Bulgarian headquarters. When he came, he brought a proposal which, in the eyes of every just and upright man, could only appear as an insult to Bulgaria. The Servians simply demanded that victors and vanquished should treat on terms of perfect equality,

and that in concluding the armistice the Bulgarians should not be conceded the slightest advantage. Their proposals were, that Servians and Bulgarians should either retain the positions in which they happened to be at the time, or that they should evacuate the enemy's districts occupied by them—that is, Bulgaria that of Pirot, Servia that of Widdin.

Under these conditions, which took no notice of the victories, Servia would condescend to conclude an armistice up to January 1. Bulgaria, however, demanded that her troops should keep their positions at Pirot, whilst the Servians should evacuate the district of Widdin, where they anyhow had only very few troops, and where they could not have maintained themselves another twenty-four hours but for the truce. About this there were constant negotiations going backwards and forwards between the two headquarters, and the Servians showed so much aptitude for procrastination, and so much *mauvaise volonté*, that the Bulgarians were repeatedly on the point of resuming hostilities. It was more than evident that the Servians only wanted to use the truce which had been forced upon the Bulgarians to get their army once more into fighting condition, and that they had not the slightest intention of concluding an armistice, much less of entertaining any serious ideas of peace. During these negotiations an incident occurred which showed only too plainly what one had to expect from the Servians. On the evening

of November 28, twelve hours after the suspension of arms had been granted, the outposts in the hills reported having heard the firing of guns in the direction of Widdin, and during the night a telegraphic report came in from Captain Usunoff that General Leshjanin had attempted on the evening of the 28th to take Widdin by assault. As soon as he, Usunoff, had observed the preparations for an attack, he had instantly sent a flag of truce to the Servian commander to inform him of the cessation of hostilities; the latter, however, proceeded to attack, notwithstanding this communication, but had been thrown back with heavy losses: Usunoff inquired what he was to do now. He, too, was at present in a position to exchange the defensive for the offensive, having received considerable reinforcements. A strong Bulgarian detachment was also near Belogradshik, and there could be no question that the Servian corps before Widdin would have been completely defeated if the Bulgarians had attacked it on the 29th. It is not difficult to imagine with what feelings the news of this new breach of faith was received in the Bulgarian headquarters. The indignation was universal, and from many sides it was demanded that the volley annulling the truce should be fired at once and the fight resumed on the morning of the 29th. Prince Alexander, however, contented himself with sending a messenger to the Servian headquarters with a request for an immediate explanation, giving him also a letter for Count

Khevenhüller, in which he informed the latter how the Servians had broken the truce they had entered upon under the moral guarantee of Austria. The answers to both messages arrived at once, and were to the effect that the Servians greatly regretted General Leshjanin's attack, but that it had been impossible to inform the general in time of the conclusion of a truce, as his headquarters were not in telegraphic communication with the King's headquarters at Nish. Thus it had come about that Leshjanin had not received news of the truce until after the attack. Of course we knew what to think of this, and that the Servians had only undertaken this attack after the truce had been agreed upon in the hope of giving their conditions of armistice an apparent justification by a final victory and the possession of Widdin. But what could we do? There was nothing for it but to accept the Servian excuses.

I should like to mention here an event which caused the greatest excitement in the Bulgarian headquarters on the 29th and 30th November, and for which I have had no explanation to this day. On both days there could distinctly be heard from the hill tops the firing of guns in the direction of Nish, so distinctly as to exclude any doubt. At first we thought that a mutiny had broken out in the army, and that the Servians were employing the truce which had been granted them by the Bulgarians in fighting one another. The deep demoralisation which had come over

their troops made such an assumption not quite improbable. Then others hit upon the idea that Austria had allowed the De Bange guns, which Servia had ordered in France, to pass through, and that the Servians were carrying out target practice with them near Nish, so as to make the gunners familiar with their new weapons. Both conjectures were found to be wrong, and the explanation afterwards furnished by the Servians, that the workmen employed on the construction of the railway between Nish and Pirot had been blasting, was quite incredible. In the first place it is not usual to continue such work in time of war and in the midst of military operations, and secondly, the shots were much too numerous for mere blasting work. What had actually taken place there we were unable to ascertain, but it could not have been quite void of interest, as the Servians hid the truth from us.

Every day brought us fresh proof that the Servian army had only been saved on the 28th, thanks to Khevenhüller's intervention. Numerous deserters told us that the troops would not fight any longer, and we heard, moreover, that on the evening of the 27th their infantry had only an average of seven cartridges left per man, and that it would have been impossible to have brought up further ammunition in less than forty-eight hours. Under these circumstances a continuation of the fighting on the 28th would not have been a battle, but simply a battue. That the Servians would

expose themselves to the danger of running short of ammunition had been clear to us for a long time, but we certainly had not an idea that no provision had been made to keep up the supply. And with all this, the Servians stoutly maintained that they had not only never been beaten, but that even after the 27th they would have been very well able to continue the fight with every chance of success. Some of them actually went so far in their ingratitude as to complain that Khevenhüller had robbed them of the possibility of sweeping the Bulgarians out of the country with an iron broom!

The want of good faith shown by the Servians during the negotiations, the warlike manifestations of an ignorant mob at Belgrad, utterly blind to the actual state of affairs, would probably have resulted in a resumption of hostilities, as the Bulgarians, though very anxious for peace, were anything but anxious to give the Servians time to prepare for a new attack.

It must therefore be considered a fortunate circumstance that Austria at least so far rendered justice to the situation she had created by her interference as to give a distinct pledge that she would not permit Servia to resume hostilities under any circumstances. This promise made it possible for the Bulgarians to keep cool and not to act hastily, in spite of the repeated breaches of treaty and provocations on the part of the Servians. Disputes constantly arose at the outposts,

sometimes with a fatal issue, which I am firmly convinced were in the majority of cases brought on by the Servians intentionally. Sometimes, I dare say, they may have come about in the way which my Belgrad colleague, Dr. Esser, describes in the following amusing letter to the 'Cologne Gazette.' Scene: the watchfire of a small Bulgarian picket in the Pirot district. A Servian patrol visiting the line of outposts is attracted by the friendly glow of the warming flame, approaches with a polite 'good-evening,' and the men beg permission to warm themselves a little, which is readily granted. They sit down, light their cigarettes, exchange their frugal provisions and a drink of water, and start a neutral conversation about the hardships of active service, which goes on quite pleasantly, interspersed with accounts of sundry deeds and adventures, but which gradually digresses into the region of politics. The origin of the whole strife is discussed, and finally one of the Servian warriors is led into using an expression of somewhat coarse criticism against Prince Alexander. Without any further ado, the nearest Bulgarian lifts his leg and delivers the impolite guest a well-aimed kick. In an instant the whole scene is changed. The Servian rolls over backwards, the entire company jump up and grasp their arms. However, fighting did not commence round the hospitable fire. The Servian patrol retired a hundred yards and then opened fire. A volley from the Bulgarians replied, and three Servians dyed the

show with their blood. The fire continued; to the right and left, on this side and on that, the rifles banged. The main body of the outposts stood to arms. The nearest troops were roused out and started off. Battalions were marching hither and thither. Orderlies galloped off to Pirot and Nish. Reports were written out, masking the no doubt very irregular original incident, enlarging it bit by bit, and investing it with fresh importance. When finally the telegraph brought the news of the occurrence to Belgrad, and probably also to Sofia, the little squabble round the picket fire had grown into a new disquieting story of an infamous breach of truce on a large scale, which was no doubt brought to the notice of the representatives of the Powers, and received by them with general shaking of heads. The story, however, was not always as harmless as this.

It was not long before we heard once more from Turkey and the Powers. The former sent Lebib Effendi to Philippopolis, as a precursor of the great 'commissioner extraordinary' who was to take over the government of Eastern Roumelia. On arriving there, however, Lebib Effendi very soon came to the conclusion that the mission and the 'commissioner extraordinary' would be fraught with dangers extraordinary. He consequently advised the Porte to put off the execution of this plan for the present, and fortunately nothing more has been heard of it. Two special envoys of the Sublime Porte, however, Madjid Pasha and Gadban Effendi, arrived in

Bulgaria, the former to co-operate with Shakir Pasha in concluding the peace with Servia, the latter as 'vakouf commissioner,' that is the Turkish plenipotentiary for settling the involved business of the property of Mahomedan mosques. About this, his proper task, Gadban Effendi probably did not bother his head for five minutes, in reality both had been charged with investigating whether and under what circumstances a direct understanding could be arrived at between Turkey and Bulgaria. In Bulgaria they were highly pleased at this. Already, in September, and especially in the beginning of October, no pains had been spared to open up direct negotiations with the Porte. They were convinced that these would speedily and easily lead to results satisfactory to both parties, and therefore it was deeply regretted when Turkey, at that time under the influence of certain Powers, declined to enter upon any direct negotiations. Now at last they had what they wanted, and therefore no umbrage was taken at the really rather strong pretension on the part of Turkey, in wanting to conclude peace for her vassal, although she had done nothing at all during the war. They were indifferent as to the form, and merely looked to the substance, knowing that they would get on very well with the Turks as soon as these had at all realised what their own interests were. Accordingly Madjid Pasha was received with high honours at Sofia, and, as a special mark of attention, orders had been given that

none but Mahomedan soldiers should furnish the guard of honour. Madjid Pasha was delighted with his reception, and at once addressed a long telegram to the Sultan, who replied by a telegram of thanks to the Prince. Thus the immediate relations between Turkey and Bulgaria were begun in the most satisfactory manner, and it could only be regretted that this had not been permitted two months ago.

The Powers introduced themselves in a less pleasant fashion. Of the undoing of the union with Eastern Roumelia there was no more mention, and even they admitted that the conquest of Eastern Roumelia had been made at Slivnitza. Some of the Powers actually struck up quite a friendly tone; they had been deceived in Bulgaria and her Prince, but were ready to make up for this. Eastern Roumelia, of course, the Prince should have, it would be easy to find a proper form for this, but in return he ought to be nice and good, and—to please the Powers—not hurt those poor Servians any more. As he was to get Eastern Roumelia, he might renounce any war indemnity on the part of the Servians, and also accept the conditions of an armistice as proposed by them. To him as victor this surely could make no difference. In the end it would have been a good business for the Bulgarians, as they had only had to defend Eastern Roumelia against the Servians instead of against the Turks. This last argument was indeed very true, and was fully admitted by the Bulgarians;

neither were they particularly bent on a war indemnity, but quite ready to give that up, provided only that their desires with regard to Eastern Roumelia were acceded to. For this, however, the Powers gave no binding assent, but only the finest promises, and so the armistice did not come off. Truly this was a very unpleasant, and, for any length of time, unbearable state of affairs, and it was comprehensible that the Powers should be anxious to put an end to it. Instead, however, of doing what was the most simple and natural, and exerting a wholesome pressure on the Servians, they chose a proceeding which seems to be the *maladie à-la-mode* of our century; they decided upon sending to Pirot a commission composed of the military attachés of the Great Powers at Vienna, to investigate on the spot who had actually been beaten, and who, therefore, was the one to give in to the demands of the other. And many a dissertation could now be read on the wisdom of this decision, on the impartiality which was guaranteed by the technical knowledge of officers far removed from politics, and on other fine things. It was only the Bulgarians who shared the feelings of that malefactor who was condemned to death, and on catching sight of the gallows '*ils n'avaient pas de confiance.*'

CHAPTER XX.

THE INTERNATIONAL MILITARY COMMISSION.

Unfavourable prospects—'Considérant les avantages remportés par l'armée bulgare' the Commission yields to the Servian demands —Despondency in the Bulgarian army—General Kaulbars and the Prince's order of the day—Two million pigs.

PIROT, that abominable hole of mud and dirt, was to have the honour of housing a real International Military Commission. After stopping on their way at Nish, where they listened to the prayers of the deeply despondent King Milan, these gentlemen arrived at Pirot, where they were at once received by Prince Alexander. He did not disguise from them that he would never have torn them from their pleasant life at Vienna, exposing them to all the privations and hardships of such a journey, if it had depended on him alone; he also told them, with his usual frankness, that he knew very well that they had only come to defend the interests of Servia against those of Bulgaria, and to deprive him of the fruits of his victories. The reception was somewhat harsh, and made such an impression on the officers as to cause one of them to say that, merely by comparing their receptions by King Milan and Prince Alexander, there could

be no doubts left as to which was the victorious and which the defeated general. The officers had arrived in the afternoon, and had at once agreed, at a preliminary meeting, that the Italian plenipotentiary, as the representative of the Power which had suggested the military commission, should take the chair, and that the members of the commission should undertake a reconnaissance the following morning (December 20) to show how conscientiously they intended carrying out the technical part of their task. After they had reviewed the situation with the eye of an expert, and, what could not be difficult, had gained an accurate estimate of the course of the entire campaign by inspecting a few hills round Pirot, their deliberations were to commence.

The following morning, however, there was a hard frost, and as this rendered the ascent of mountains and riding in general somewhat dangerous, the commission wisely decided to remain at home. The deliberations, at which Turkey and Bulgaria were represented by Shakir Pasha and Captain Panoff, and Servia by General Topalowitch, began at once, but led to no result on the first day. On the following day the discussion was resumed, at first without admitting the Servian and Bulgarian representatives. Only this much was known, that the commission wanted, under any circumstances, to bring its labours to an end on that very day, and that hitherto the Italian and Austrian representatives, Cerruti and Rosenberg-Orsini, had shown themselves to be ex-

ceedingly hostile to the Bulgarian cause, whilst Shakir Pasha alone had stood up in favour of the Bulgarians. Several of Shakir's proposals, which had met with the general approbation of the other officers, had been frustrated by Rosenberg's opposition. Under those circumstances we were prepared to hear that the simultaneous evacuation of Pirot and Widdin would be decided upon, and the greatest excitement prevailed amongst officers and men. The second meeting of the commission began at three o'clock, and at half-past four the Servian and Bulgarian representatives were recalled. The protocol was read to them, in which all the Servian demands had been agreed to, that is, simultaneous evacuation of Pirot and Widdin—but which offered the Bulgarians the small satisfaction that, '*considérant les avantages remportés par l'armée bulgare*,' the Servians should begin their evacuation two days earlier. The armistice was to last to March 1, and the peace negotiations were to begin at once. Now, however, the Servian, Topalowitch, refused his signature! This was at first apparently looked upon as a bad joke, but finally the officers of the commission lost all patience. I am convinced that at least some of them only submitted with inward aversion to the orders of their Government in signing a document which wounded to the quick the deepest feelings of a brave army, and that too for the sake of a State whose policy was deserving of as little sympathy as its army. The impudence of General

Topalowitch, who still wanted to save appearances, as if Servia were really the victor, was more than the members of the commission would stand, and he had to be told in very plain terms that he had not been called in to give or refuse his consent, but simply to sign. So, at five o'clock in the afternoon, the signatures of all the plenipotentiaries of this technical commission were appended—a commission which might well have saved itself the trouble of coming to Pirot, as it saw nothing else there but maps, which were to be had at Vienna quite as good or even better. It was, in fact—there is no other word for it—a pure comedy, and it remains difficult to explain who was intended to be taken in by it. Perhaps public opinion, which had in so decided a manner taken the part of the Bulgarians. Even this probably did not succeed.

'*Considérant les avantages remportés par l'armée bulgare*;' this consolation was very meagre, still one would gladly have been satisfied with it, if only peace had thereby been assured—peace with Servia and a settlement of the Eastern Roumelian affairs. 'Naturally you will get Eastern Roumelia now; why, that is simply a matter of course,' said most of the foreign officers, and they seemed really to believe it. A guarantee in proper form they could not give, as they had no diplomatic powers, but were only officers charged with a distinct technical task; that is perhaps why they solved the question of an armistice in such a 'technical'

manner. Whoever still doubted, in the slightest degree, that the mission of these officers was pure make-believe, ought to have been convinced, when a Tchech newspaper at Prague, whose relations with the Russian military attaché at Vienna, General Kaulbars, are notorious, published the conditions of the armistice, such as they were afterwards actually agreed to, even before the commission arrived.

Of especial interest was the attitude of this Russian general, Kaulbars,[1] who had formerly been in Bulgaria, but who must not be confounded with the General Kaulbars who attempted to organise the previously mentioned *coup d'état* against Prince Alexander. Kaulbars made it appear as if Russia had watched the Bulgarian victories with the greatest sympathy, and as if a 'deplorable misunderstanding' had not been able to sever the old and firm ties between the two countries. It was pointed out to the general that an order of the day by the Emperor of Russia, just published, bestowed high praise on the Russian officers recalled from Bulgaria, for their excellent work in the Bulgarian army, but that it made no mention of Prince Alexander or the native officers. If Russia thus only awarded the merit of the late victories to the Russian officers, it could surely only be taken as a fresh manifestation of enmity and as a mark of derision. Against this Kaulbars protested most energetically, saying he had

[1] The same who is now gaining notoriety in Bulgaria.

never thought it possible that such a construction could be put upon this order of the day; surely the Emperor could not mention Prince Alexander and the Bulgarian officers in an order of the day, seeing that they did not belong to his army. But if the Emperor, at the very moment of the Bulgarian victories, conferred such signal distinction on the Russian officers who had served in Bulgaria, would not this distinction apply quite naturally to the Bulgarians as well? If one wished to put any special construction on the imperial decree, one surely could only read between the lines the regret at the misunderstandings which had led to the present tension. Kaulbars maintained that it was impossible for the Emperor of Russia to take the *first* step towards removing them; but a hint that a first step on the part of Bulgaria would immediately be followed by a second one on the part of Russia, was to be found in the said document. Kaulbars was bound to be accurately informed of his sovereign's views; the idea that he had been sent to Pirot without very distinct instructions could not be entertained; and so Prince Alexander did that which he considered to be his duty in the interest of his country. Without any thought of the personal insult Russia had put upon him, he signed an order of the day in which the merits of the Russian officers as instructors of the Bulgarian army were commented upon in the most flattering manner. This was the first step—the second never came, and Kaulbars' promise

that Russia would put no further obstacles in the way of Bulgaria's union with Eastern Roumelia has not been kept. Had they changed their minds at St. Petersburg, had it been desired to bring about a quarrel between the Prince and his people; for that order of the day made very bad blood in the army and throughout the country? I am unable to answer these questions.

Now, however, there was no further staying at Pirot. Immediately after the armistice had been signed the Plevna regiment received orders to retire on Zaribrod, and the others were to follow as soon as the Servians had evacuated the Widdin district. The resolutions of the international military commission had caused the greatest discontent in the army, yet the troops left Pirot with joy, and the wrong that had been done them was forgotten because they believed peace to have been restored, and still more because they were firmly convinced that the Roumelian question was now definitely settled by Bulgaria's compliance with the demands of Europe. Had not the European officers all said as much? Had not the different Cabinets given their best promises, and did we not live in the greatest possible harmony with the Turks? The war indemnity was hardly thought of, and one of the leading Bulgarian statesmen said jokingly: 'Money the Servians have none, consequently they will not be able to give us any. But pigs are to be found in plenty, and it would only be

just if they were to hand us over at least two millions of these national animals as a war indemnity.' This shows that on leaving Pirot the Bulgarians were still in a humour to crack jokes; they believed their real object to have been attained.

CHAPTER XXI.

PRINCE ALEXANDER'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.

Enthusiastic reception by the populace—Presence of the Diplomatic Corps—A brigade unexpectedly takes part in the entry—The Prince's thanks for the care of the wounded—New tasks.

As the sun was smiling down on Sofia with its brightest rays on the morning of December 26, lighting up the many-coloured venetian masts and flags, the gaily decorated houses and people, I could not help comparing this picture with another which I had seen five weeks before, on November 19, in that self-same Sofia. On that day also the weather was lovely, almost June-like, and on that day also the streets were full of people hurriedly running backwards and forwards and talking eagerly; on that day, also, Prince Alexander returned to his capital, along that same road, from the camp at Slivnitza. But how different was the situation then! The Prince had been recalled to Sofia by the anxiety, for which there was only too much cause at one time, that the Servians would push on to Sofia from Bresnik, threatening the capital directly, and the position of Slivnitza in rear.

It was a bright, clear day, almost calm, so that every gun was distinctly heard at Sofia, indeed sometimes so distinctly that one could have believed that the action was being fought only a few miles from the gates. Some frightened but inquisitive people streamed out on to the Slivnitza road to see what was really going on there, whilst in the town itself, whenever the fire grew louder, great numbers were prepared to see the Servians arrive at Sofia in a few hours' time. That was on November 19, during the fights round Slivnitza—those fights which held out to the Bulgarians the first hopes of future victories, and which kept their promise.

Since that day so many changes had taken place that Sofia was fully entitled to look different now from what it did then. For the last two days everyone had worked away with the greatest eagerness to prepare the town worthily for the reception of the Prince and his victorious army; and considering the short space of time, and the scanty means at their disposal, as much had been done as was really possible, although the large triumphal arches had not been quite finished. The *via triumphalis*, if such a high-sounding name can be applied to the tortuous main street, was decorated everywhere with venetian masts and garlands, and the street was closely lined with people who were evidently all in the happiest frame of mind. Many of the inhabitants had gone a long way out of town to meet the Prince, and even some of the diplomats had driven out

in full uniform to welcome him on his return. It was no longer a case of requesting the Prince in a diplomatic note to deliver over Sofia to the Servians without fighting, but simply of congratulating him on the victories he had won.

With military punctuality, on the stroke of eleven the procession approached the gates of the town, where an endless, closely packed crowd was awaiting its arrival. At its head rode the Prince in his plain campaigning uniform; behind him the Adjutant-General Petroff, Captain Panoff, Prince Francis, the aides-de-camp, and the remainder of the staff. A curious movement took hold of the crowd, which at first had been still and silent, and as if driven by an unconscious impulse they streamed into the hitherto empty centre of the street with never-ending cheers, and soon the Prince was surrounded by a perfect sea of heads and upraised hands. Wreaths and bouquets were offered him from all sides, and soon he and his horse all but disappeared under the green load. Bulgaria is not a country of solemn ceremonies, and this informal greeting, this breaking through the barriers, this closing round the Prince which made further advance impossible; all this was anything but regular, and would have driven any other master of the ceremonies than Baron Riedesel to despair; but the whole thing was so warmly felt, so hearty, that Prince Alexander with difficulty prevented his feelings from getting the mastery over him. It was

a splendid reception which the people thus gave their Prince, and it was all the more worthy of notice as the Bulgarians as a rule rarely express either grief or joy by any loud manifestations, whilst on this occasion, forgetting their usual calmness, they were quite beside themselves with delight. At last the Prince succeeded, by kind and patient expostulations, in gaining enough room to enable him to ride on into the town, greeted on all sides by the same enthusiasm of the populace. In front of the Palace, where the march past of the troops was to take place, the entire 'corps diplomatique' in full dress received the Prince, and even the Russian representative had put in an appearance. Then the march past of the victorious young troops began, and their proud bearing showed clearly how much they felt themselves as the victors of Slivnitza, Zaribrod, and Pirot. Three regiments of infantry, a Roumelian battalion, a cavalry regiment, and two batteries of artillery, which made up the division formed for that purpose, came past the Prince; nor was this by any means the end of the procession. For, as we thought that the last troops had marched past, again the 'Djumi-Maritza' resounded, new battalions came along, and to everyone's surprise it appeared that two infantry regiments and a squadron of cavalry had joined the function uninvited. To that end both regiments had covered the distance from Dragoman to Sofia, that is thirty miles, during the forenoon, and so reached the

capital a day earlier than they were expected. That they should have taken part in this entry, to which they had not been ordered, without asking anybody's leave, appears somewhat too independent according to our usual ideas. Yet it was no doubt a very 'smart' thing for two regiments to march an additional stage of thirty miles, without any compulsion, in one forenoon. Above all, regiments which had fought so splendidly could for once allow themselves a small deviation from the regulations, and so they were greeted by the Prince as heartily as the other troops had been. Afterwards, of course, came the difficulty of providing sufficient accommodation for these unexpected guests.

As soon as the last troops had passed, and the Prince had made sure that there were really no more to follow, he dismounted, and for some time conversed in the most amiable manner with those present, finding an opportunity to say a kind and complimentary word to almost everyone. Our countrymen of the 'Red Cross Society' especially were delighted with the warm praise the Prince bestowed on their performances. He had Dr. Langenbuch and his assistants, as well as all the German nurses, introduced to him, and told them how particularly pleased he was that Germany had thought of him and his country. From the beginning of the war Prince Alexander had given the greatest attention to all the arrangements connected with the care of the sick and wounded, and had always manifested the

warmest gratitude towards those who had rendered any services to their cause, at home or abroad.

This solemn entry was the real end of the war, for, though the conclusion of peace was still wanting, a great portion of the reserves could already be dismissed to their homes, and this could be done all the more safely, as they were certain on the first call of the Prince to stand to their arms like one man. But if the din of battles had ceased, there still remained to the Prince a military task of the greatest importance. A firm organisation must be given to his army, loosened by all the events connected with the revolution and the war; the young soldiers must again be worked up in their drills, and the discipline which naturally suffers in war time be restored. Finally, the Roumelian troops must be amalgamated with the Bulgarian, and brought up to the same standard as the latter. Only if that succeeded could Bulgaria calmly face an ever possible renewal of hostilities. The Prince, the War Minister Nikiforoff, and all the officers, fully recognised the importance of this task, and gave themselves up to it with the greatest zeal.

But besides all this there yet remained the diplomatic labour, with new difficulties not dreamed of on the day of the entry.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CAUSE OF THE BULGARIAN VICTORIES.

Different views taken of them—The Prince's personal merit and the proper choice of his lieutenants—General devotion of the people to the national cause.

WHEN some time had elapsed since the Bulgarian victories had been gained, and public interest was no longer taken up by the reports of military events, the question was asked in Europe, what had been the causes which had brought about such surprising results. The answer usually given was that the Servian defeats must be ascribed to the superior bravery of the Bulgarian troops, and to Prince Alexander's personal qualities. This answer is not wrong in itself, but so general that it will not be superfluous to consider the subject somewhat more fully.

It stands above all doubt that Bulgaria affords quite excellent material for soldiers; that the men possess tremendous staying powers and are very frugal; that they submit to discipline easily and willingly, indeed, with unmistakable intelligence. Like all really well-disciplined troops, the Bulgarians showed

remarkable bravery in action, which was perhaps increased by the knowledge of their greater physical strength as compared with the Servians. There can also be no doubt that the feeling of fighting for a national cause, and of defending hearth and home against an unjust attack, had the greatest influence on the moral tone of the soldiers, and especially of the officers; and finally no one can deny that Prince Alexander's personal bearing, before and during the campaign, gave his army the will and the strength to fight with that devotion and enthusiasm which they showed. Still, I believe that, even taking into account the numerous mistakes of the Servians, this alone will not explain the Bulgarian victories, nor does the assertion that the issue of the war was owing to the difference in organisation of the two armies appear to me to answer this question rightly, or at least exhaustively. Certainly the Bulgarian army, that is the thirty-two line battalions, had this advantage over the Servians, that it consisted of troops of the line in the European sense of the word, whilst the Servian army still retained the character of a militia. The fact that the burden of the entire campaign, with the exception of Widdin, rested on the Bulgarian line, has perhaps contributed towards making the war appear as the fight of the standing army system *versus* the militia system; but although I also am of opinion that the Bulgarians were given some superiority by their system, still this

was at least compensated for by the unfavourable position they occupied at the commencement of the campaign, and by the breaking up of brigades and regiments inevitably brought about by the suddenness of the march towards the Servian frontier.

A well-known general and eminent strategist at Constantinople gave me as his view, that the Bulgarians have to ascribe their victories to the fact that they were first acting on the defensive, were able to let the attacking Servians break themselves against their fortified positions, and then were able quickly to utilise the confusion which spread in the enemy's camp for striking a blow extending up to Pirot. The real superiority of the Bulgarian army, he contended, would only have been proved in unanswerable manner if it had remained victorious in the same situation as the Servian, that is in the attack on fortified positions. The general conjectured that perhaps the Bulgarians would have fared as badly before the Servian positions at Nish as the Servians did at Slivnitza. Against this view, which is certainly correct in general, various objections can be raised in this particular case, especially the fact that the Servian army not only broke down before the fortified positions of Slivnitza, but principally before the Bulgarian assaults on the right flank in the mountains. If the war had continued, a new and improved edition of the Slivnitza occurrences would anyhow have been

impossible at Nish, for the simple reason that the Bulgarians would not have attacked those fortified positions at all. The Bulgarian plan on the contrary was only to push on towards Nish until a good defensive position had been reached, and then, leaving behind a corps of observation, to march along the Knajewatz road straight on Belgrad, whilst Usunoff's corps, following the course of the Danube from Widdin, would have formed the right wing of the attacking force. Probably the Servians would then have been forced to evacuate Nish of their own accord.

A great, indeed the greater, part of success in war will always depend on the leaders, and, contrary to general expectation, the Bulgarians showed themselves in this respect far and away superior to the Servians. *In spite* of the youthful age of their officers, or *on account* of it? I do not go to the length of the above-mentioned general, who in answering this question in the latter sense expressed his views in the following paradox: 'That army will always be victorious which has the courage to remove the whole of its old officers at the moment of declaring war.' Still, it was evident that our young officers possessed two qualities which would hardly be found to the same extent amongst older officers; a capacity for hard work which nothing could impair, and an ambition which the optimism of youth had stretched to the utmost. The War Minister Nikiforoff, and the Adjutant-General Petroff, with their

few subordinates, had a really tremendous load of work on their shoulders, such as would probably not have been borne so easily by older men. In an old standing army, living under well-regulated conditions, everything is foreseen and prearranged for the best. You have only to press a button, and the machinery sets itself in motion. Here there was nothing of all this, and in the midst of the operations all the dispositions had to be made which really ought to have served as a groundwork for those very operations. That under such circumstances everything went off with so little disorder, that the War Minister, especially with the scanty means at his disposal, was able to satisfy all demands with regard to food supply for the troops, providing of spare ammunition, and the business of mobilising proper, was a performance of which it is extremely questionable whether it would have been done so thoroughly if the Russian officers had still been at the head of the army. With the actual leaders of the troops, the Gutscheffs, Bendereffs, Nikolajeffs, Popoffs, Usunoffs, the case stood so that they had to possess a considerable amount of optimism at the commencement of operations, to enable them to lead their men into action with good cheer, and undeterred by the difficulties of the situation. They knew full well how matters stood, but heeded no obstacles, since a victor's prize awaited them such as perhaps has never before been held out to the officers of any army. They were young lieu-

tenants and captains, with at most eight years' service, they were therefore, so to speak, nothing, or at least very little; and now they were given an opportunity of gaining at one blow, glory, promotions, distinctions, which in the ordinary course of events they could only have expected at the ripest age! When a general wins a battle, this is nothing very exceptional, and really no more than his duty; but when a captain is taken from his company and placed at the head of 10,000, or even 20,000 men, and when he then achieves victories which hoary-headed generals could envy him, surely it is a very different thing! In proportion to the magnitude of the prize, the exertions of those will increase who are given a chance of contending for it. It was, therefore, no wonder that our young officers did their very best to make the most of an opportunity so unexpected and so unlikely to occur again. If they succeeded in doing so, surely this was their personal merit; but that the hazardous venture with these young men led to victory at all, instead of to utter collapse, must again be ascribed to Prince Alexander, who understood how to *put the right men in the right places.* Bravery and the ambition to distinguish themselves they all possessed, but the *ability* to do so, only a few; and precisely those few were picked out and placed in command at the most responsible posts. Gutscheff, Bendereff, and Usunoff were repeatedly forced to act entirely on their own initiative and responsibility, and

if the operations which they planned and guided had miscarried, the issue of the whole campaign would have become doubtful. It is a matter of justice that the merits of the sub-leaders so happily chosen by the Prince should be acknowledged as they can justly claim to be. If Prince Alexander had been unlucky in the choice of his divisional commanders, all the clear-sighted and prudent leadership, all the personal bravery of the Prince, would hardly have sufficed to make the Bulgarian colours victorious. But the right choice was a 'merit' in itself, and the more difficult the choice the greater the merit. When the sovereign of a great empire finds himself obliged to choose his generals, a certain number of individuals will at once present themselves to his mind whose whole career offers greater or less guarantees for their fitness. Every one of them has a history of his own, a past from which to judge of his capabilities, whilst Prince Alexander had to deal throughout with young unknown men, whose capacity for generalship could at the most be guessed at by a personal estimate, but never predicted on the strength of distinct facts. Captain X. may be an excellent leader of a company, it is also possible that he may be a great general in embryo; but one cannot know this, as he has never found himself in a situation where such a quality could have been exhibited. It required a penetrating eye, an exceptional knowledge of human nature, to pick

out from among the Bulgarian officers, who were all in the position of Captain X., the right men for the higher posts, and not to be mistaken in a single one. Of course the element which held together and animated these young leaders was still Prince Alexander, apart from whom, in fact, the Servo-Bulgarian war cannot be thought of. If ever the much-abused saying that he was the soul of his army can apply to a general, this is the case with Prince Alexander, whose merits in connection with both the political and the military history of Bulgaria are so brilliant that one may well bestow a portion of this brilliancy on his fellow-labourers without detracting from the Prince.

From what I have said it appears, that, looking upon the bravery and perseverance of the soldiers as a matter of course, I am inclined to ascribe a great part of the success to the leadership, that is, to Prince Alexander and his lieutenants. But to be able to explain this success completely, one factor must not be overlooked, which was of the greatest importance, although it had no direct share in the actual fighting. I mean the general devotion, and the readiness to make sacrifices, which was to be found throughout the country, and especially amongst the soldiers and peasants. All officials gave up a proportionate amount of their salaries during the war (the Prince himself doing so to the extent of one half of his civil list); the officers received

next to nothing, and the soldiers had to be satisfied with being clothed and fed. In order to have a few millions in cash to fall back upon in case of need, the numerous requisitions were only paid for in promissory notes, so that probably one-fourth of the entire population now has claims against the public exchequer. Notwithstanding this, all requisitions were readily complied with during the war; live stock, farm produce, and their own labour were cheerfully placed at the disposal of the Government by the otherwise very economical peasants, and if a loan had become necessary, and could not have been floated abroad, it would, I am firmly convinced, have been covered in the country itself. The peasants had already lightened the contents of many a stocking, but they would also have given all that remained if they had been asked to do so. And with what readiness the 'blood-tax' was paid! I do not speak of the line, where I look upon this as a matter of course, but of the reserves and volunteers. They came streaming in from every part of the land, called and uncalled, badly clothed and hardly clothed at all, with arms and without, but they all came with the firm resolve to give their best strength to their country. A bright wave of patriotism set through that usually so still and quiet country, and those who had known the people formerly did not recognise them again.

The Prince, his lieutenants, and the patriotic devotion of the entire population, whether they wore the

soldier's tunic or the civilian's coat—these are the causes of the successes of the Bulgarian arms; and the last named of them furnishes at the same time a proof for the justification of the whole Bulgarian movement.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BULGARIA'S FUTURE.

Events up to the conclusion of the Peace with Servia, and the work of the European Conference—Prince Alexander as the bearer of the Bulgarian national idea—Comparison of the development of the country without the Prince and under Russian tutelage with its future as a free state under Prince Alexander—In the one case decline of the country and creation of a new Nihilistic centre; in the other, prosperous, peaceful progress of the young Bulgarian State.

AT the moment when this book is brought to conclusion,[1] the settlement of the Bulgarian question can unfortunately not yet be considered as a definite one. After endless laborious negotiations, which repeatedly threatened to be frustrated by Servia's want of good faith, a treaty was signed at Bucharest, just before the expiration of the armistice, consisting of a single paragraph, to the effect that the peace between Bulgaria and Servia, which had been interrupted by the war, was re-established. Servia had therefore suffered no other punishment for her invasion than the defeats during the war, and a loss of military and political prestige and financial credit hardly ever to be regained. It was not

[1] April, 1886.

without a feeling of bitterness difficult to repress that Bulgaria's ruler signed the treaty; if anything could reconcile the Bulgarians to this settlement, forced upon them by Europe, it was the fact that it at least created a definite and clear situation between Servia and Bulgaria, and above all—that it brought peace.

The negotiations with Turkey at first proceeded more satisfactorily than those with Servia. They were entered upon at Constantinople, about the middle of January, by the Grand Vizier, Kiamil Pasha, and the Foreign Minister, Said Pasha, in the name of the Sultan, and by Tsanoff, in the name of the Prince of Bulgaria. I was at Constantinople at the time, and I can say that from the first day of these negotiations I had not the slightest doubt but that they would be brought to a happy issue. Here the case was different to that at Bucharest, for the two parties facing each other were both acting honestly and openly, and were firmly determined, whilst taking each other's rights and wishes as much as possible into consideration, to create a state of things which would carry with it the guarantee of long and peaceful duration. Under such conditions it is easy to negotiate, and thus a treaty was concluded, which I do not consider quite an ideal one, but which could anyhow be looked upon as a satisfactory solution of the involved situation. In accordance with it, the Sultan nominated Prince Alexander Governor-General of Eastern Roumelia, leaving the revision of the Organic Statute to a special

Turko-Bulgarian commission, which was to assemble at once. A few frontier districts near Haskioi, and in the Rhodope mountains, only inhabited by Mahomedans, were handed back to Turkish rule; and finally, as the most important item, a complete offensive and defensive alliance was concluded between Turkey and Bulgaria, according to which both parties were bound to give each other military assistance in the case of being attacked. If Bulgaria were assailed, Turkish troops should enter the Principality and be placed under Prince Alexander's command; in the other case Bulgarian troops should be under the orders of Turkish generals.

Although this treaty did not fulfil all the wishes of the Bulgarians, and the impending labours of the Turko-Bulgarian commission might bring on many more difficulties—which, however, would probably be mastered by the existing good faith—yet the satisfaction and pleasure in Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia was universal. The work of unification seemed completed in point of fact, if not in point of form; the privations and sacrifices of the last months were no longer thought of, and preparations were made to resume the interrupted occupations of peace time. However, one had forgotten to take account of the Russians, who were ceaselessly continuing their underground work against the union, but especially against the person of Prince Alexander. When the Kiamil-Tsanoff treaty was communicated by the Porte to the Great Powers for their consent, Russia's

hostility showed forth openly. Up to then, the representatives of all the Powers at Constantinople had expressed themselves to the Turks and Tsanoff in about the following terms: 'See that you come to an understanding! We are sick and tired of the Bulgarian complication; we don't want to hear of it any more, and are only anxious that it should be done with—how, we don't care! Our consent will not be wanting; that is a simple matter of form. We don't know your agreement, but we approve of it. All we ask is, that the whole question should disappear!' I believe that the majority at least of the ambassadors expressed their real views in these words; at any rate I know that Kiamil, Said, and Tsanoff were firmly convinced that the Powers had given up all opposition. That the treaty would not please the Russians was to be expected, but it was believed that they would bow before the inevitable. Instead of this a protest was raised against the mutual succour in war, as provided for in the treaty. It might be, so the semi-official Russian organs put it, that the dreadful case would occur of the Bulgarians fighting against a Christian nation together with the Turks, therefore this part of the agreement could not be accepted. For the sake of dear peace, Turks and Bulgarians hastened to strike out of their treaty the paragraphs offensive to Russia; they could do so all the more easily, as a *casus fœderis et belli*, generally speaking, is less influenced by paper treaties than by the

interests and feelings of the parties concerned. Perhaps Russia was but little pleased by this ready consent to her desires, for she at once put forth a second demand: to strike out Prince Alexander's *name* from the treaty—so that it was not Prince Alexander, but 'the Prince of Bulgaria,' who would be Governor-General of Eastern Roumelia. This personal sacrifice also was agreed to by the Prince without further ado. Now, however, the Russians demanded in addition that the Prince should only be appointed for five years, and that then his reappointment should be made dependent on the consent of the Powers. At the same time their agents, who were incessantly employed in agitating, especially in Eastern Roumelia, accused Prince Alexander of sacrificing the interests of his people to the extent of consenting to be nominated Governor-General for a period of only five years! This five-year rule, indeed, had some very serious aspects, particularly as it opened a door to the interference of the Powers, and above all of Russia. Instead of creating a definite and clear situation, a makeshift was resorted to, and that too with the appearance as if this arrangement, so unfavourable for the country, had been made with Prince Alexander's consent, or even at his instigation. The Prince ran the risk of losing all his popularity, especially as one well knew how the Russians would turn his compliance to account against him with his subjects. He therefore declined to accept this condition, and stuck to his

refusal notwithstanding all the pressure brought to bear on him by the Powers, who, following completely in the wake of Russia, seemed to have forgotten their former promises. It was then that the Powers decided simply to ignore his refusal, and had a protocol signed by their ambassadors, on April 5, which appointed the Prince Governor-General of Eastern Roumelia for five years, under the conditions demanded by Russia.

Besides the above-mentioned stipulations introduced by Russia into the protocol, the nomination of a Turko-Bulgarian commission deserves to be specially mentioned, which was to make such alterations in the Eastern Roumelian statutes as were called for by the new conditions. This commission had also been provided for in the original Turko-Bulgarian convention, but then it was assumed that the alterations, once settled by the commission, were final, whereas the new protocol decides that these alterations must be submitted to a conference of ambassadors at Constantinople for their consent. With the evident ill-will which Russia shows in the whole concern, there is no guarantee that she will not make the terms of the new statute a further pretext for interference. For this reason, and until the new statute, about which an agreement will be easily arrived at between Turkey and Bulgaria, is approved, the situation can unfortunately not be looked upon as final, if a settlement for the short space of five years can be called a final one.

Despite all the shortcomings of this agreement, Prince Alexander ultimately had no choice but to accept the protocol forced upon him by the Great Powers, or rather to passively submit to it. A Sultan's firman accordingly appointed him Governor-General of Eastern Roumelia, and thus formally closed the Bulgarian question which the revolt at Philippopolis had opened. Hereby the personal union of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia, already accomplished in point of fact, was fulfilled on paper also, and there only remains the question, whether in the course of later development, foreign influence will attempt to undo what was created here.

If we now put the question, what shape the situation in Bulgaria will assume in future, an answer can only be given under certain suppositions, considering how very unsettled the state of affairs is. Two cases can occur. Either Prince Alexander will be driven from the country, or he will maintain his position; according to which way this is decided, Bulgaria's development will progress in one or the other of two directions. I do not believe in the indispensability of individuals; I take it that they can all be replaced, and if there are men who have impressed their sign-manual on their time and on their nation, these men are, on the other hand, the outcome of their own time. The question whether great men make great times, or great times great men, will never be finally decided; close reciprocity exists between men and times, and an individual will only become

really indissolubly connected with the destinies of a country when he is more than a mere personality—the embodiment of an idea, the representative of a system. Prince Alexander is not only a wise and just ruler, a brave and fortunate general; he is more than a personality, he is the *Bearer of the Bulgarian national idea.* This idea stands and falls with him, and that is why Bulgaria's future destiny depends upon whether Prince Alexander stands or falls.

Let us assume that Russia, in order to rid herself of the Prince, were to resort to an extreme measure, for without such nothing is to be done, and were to cut with her sword the Gordian knot that she tied herself. A Russian army lands at Varna to restore 'peace and quiet' in Bulgaria, i.e. to turn out Prince Alexander and to establish Russian rule once more. Perhaps a Bulgarian army will be in readiness at Varna to meet the Russians with force of arms, and it might happen that the Russians will have to deliver the Bulgarians with streams of blood from their own rule now, as they delivered them from Turkish rule in 1877. It is also possible that the Bulgarians will suffer the Russian occupation to take place without any military resistance, and that Prince Alexander will, on the Russians landing, leave his country and renounce his crown. I do not know which will happen, but in either case the result must be the same, since the Bulgarians cannot resist the Russians for any length of time; Bulgaria and

Eastern Roumelia will be occupied by the Russians, who will establish themselves there so firmly that both countries will in future form a Russian province, whether it be under a Russian Governor-General, or under a 'dummy' Prince such as no doubt can be discovered somewhere in Europe. It is possible, indeed even probable, that the Russian invasion alone will suffice to open up the Eastern question in its entire extent, and to make peace-loving Europe a fellow-sufferer; it is possible that this invasion will at once result in a general European war. However, I wish to show how conditions in Bulgaria would take shape under its new Government, and therefore I will assume that the Europe of the Dulcigno and Crete naval demonstrations remains in 'masterly inactivity' and perhaps even gives Russia a 'European mandate.'

The consequences of the Russian rule will make themselves soonest felt in foreign affairs. Russia on the Pruth, on the Danube, and on the Maritza, strong in the power of success, must inevitably exercise the greatest influence at Bucharest and Belgrad, and those States will join themselves intimately to her, having learnt by the experience of the Bulgarians that any opposition to Russia is in vain, that the preservation of their national independence will only be possible by placing themselves under Russia's protection. And how should they, the small ones, dare resist a Power before which the great ones, before which all Europe

bows down mute and obedient! With Russia's re-entry into Bulgaria the question of Constantinople is also solved, and sooner or later the Czar will no longer make Livadia his spring residence, but the banks of the Bosphorus. As to the Greeks, who are now playing into the hands of the Russians with so much zeal, they may as well renounce their dreams of the future once and for ever. It is only with difficulty that they can now manage to stand up against the growing influence of Bulgarianism in those Turkish provinces which they call 'Hellenic'; the mighty power of the Russian Colossus will crush them irretrievably, and the dreams of a 'great Hellas' will not even be *dreams* then. Russia from the Mediterranean to the Carpathians —that is the picture of the future which offers itself to view if the Russians are permitted to destroy the Bulgarian independence and to drive away Prince Alexander.

But what will be the internal development of the new Russian vassal State 'Bulgaria'? It was only by force that it was once more made subject to the Russian Empire, and the Russian occupation was the negation of all the endeavours towards creating an independent national Bulgaria. This national Bulgaria of to-day, which labours at its development with a degree of strength and energy unknown in Europe, will only be kept down by force, as it has been conquered by force. This Bulgaria, such as it is, does not fit into the frame of the Russian Empire, and therefore it will have to

undergo a complete transformation to make it worthy and capable of becoming a Russian province. The power to crush it is there, and it will be crushed; the aspiring State, or, at least, everyone in the State who has aspirations, will be destroyed, and the development of the country will not only be arrested but forced back. Does Russia believe that this will be achieved without a struggle? If so, she does not know the Bulgarians, and does not realise that those who have tasted liberty once do not renounce it so easily. In 1878 it was possible to make Bulgaria a 'good' Russian province; to-day it is not. The Bulgarians are difficult enough to govern even when they carry out the government of their own country themselves; the 'stranger,' however, will only be able to rule them by force, by oppression, and the first and most certain consequence will be that Russia in destroying a political people will create a new breeding place for Nihilism, which will produce no less impassioned, no less criminal men than those Russia already has the doubtful fortune of possessing. The Russian general who, after a victorious progress to Sofia, lays the reconquered country at the feet of the Emperor, will have presented his master with a gift of the Danai of the very worst kind. If on one hand the conquest of Bulgaria gives the Russians the undisputed mastery in the Balkan peninsula, it will on the other hand bring elements into their state organism which to-day are still healthy, but which will turn into rank

poison under the Russian rule. And the country itself, which has every prospect of a rich and happy development, will perish miserably!

Another picture of the future! Suppose Prince Alexander succeeds in maintaining himself, despite his dangerous position, and in disarming the ill-will with which he is met, or at least in rendering it harmless. In this case we shall, in a very short time, hear next to nothing of Bulgaria, for government and people alike will use their utmost endeavours to make up by peaceful labours for all that was necessarily neglected during the almost twelve months' war. An attempt will be made to bring about a good understanding with the neighbouring States of the same race, and if Servia were sulkily to keep aloof, this would only be her own fault. Bulgaria has never entertained aggressive feelings towards Servia any more than towards Roumania, and if these three States realise their own interests they will hold firmly together. Whether in later times a more binding tie could be formed, a confederation of States after the manner of the former Germanic confederation, is a question for the future which the practical politician of to-day may perhaps consider, but as to the feasibility of which he can form no distinct idea. But whether it will be called a confederacy of States, a State confederation, or merely community of interests, closer relations between these countries must be brought about; and there is hardly a doubt that this will succeed if Bul-

garia's independence should be the outcome of the present crisis. If Russia can once make up her mind to leave the Bulgarians in peace, the great Powers will have no further cause to hold European congresses, conferences, or ambassadorial consultations, and for a long time to come Bulgaria will play no greater part in European politics than Portugal does now. This is the firm resolve of all those who to-day occupy influential and leading positions in Bulgaria, and who are all convinced that their country requires nothing so urgently as a long period of calm and rest. These men have managed to maintain order throughout the land, during troublesome times and under the most difficult circumstances, and one may assume that they will succeed in doing so still better in times of peace.

The most important question for politics in general is, what Bulgaria's relations to Russia and to Turkey will be in future. As regards Russia they are decidedly hostile now; but one cannot presume that this bitterness will last, if only Russia would resolve to change the policy she has hitherto pursued and to desist from brutal interference. The policy of oppression, of unscrupulous domination, has borne its well-deserved fruits, and if in Eastern Roumelia there still are from five to ten per cent. of the population amenable to Russian influence, I am prepared to count the friends of Russia in *Bulgaria* on the fingers of my two hands. Considering the sacrifices in blood and money which

Russia has entailed on Bulgaria, considering the community of language, race, and religion, it seems monstrous that Russia should have arrived at such a humiliating position in the short space of eight years, and it can only be explained by the fact that Russia has, with unfeeling brutality, laid hands on what the Bulgarians value most—their national independence. To bring about such a result was not in the power of one man, not in the power of Prince Alexander, whom the Russians wrongly held responsible for everything that has turned against them. Indeed, I even maintain that such an anti-Russian feeling never could have originated in Bulgaria and amongst the Bulgarians; that it was the Russians, and only the Russians, who could have succeeded in working this miracle. What has taken place is entirely owing to their purblind policy, and if they desist from it, undoubtedly a current in the opposite direction will soon set in. The Bulgarians are only in so far hostile to the Russians as these look upon the country as a Russian province, and its inhabitants as second-class Russians; but the Russia which leaves the Bulgarians free to further their national development, which renounces dominion where her rule meets with opposition, but exercises it where her legitimate influence finds a large field of activity, that Russia will find the Bulgarians, already so closely related to her by ties of religion and race, prepared to meet her in the most ample manner, and will cause the hatred

which she brought on herself during this last year to be forgotten. The least obstacle in the way of all this is the person of Prince Alexander, who has given sufficient proof that he is too good a statesman ever to allow personal insults and animosity to influence his policy. If Russia now renounces this policy of violence, the consequences of which are simply incalculable, there will be nothing left her but to carry out a policy of reconciliation, so as to regain a portion of that which has been lost to her in Bulgaria through the bungling and the wantonness of her representatives. They were frustrated in their attempts because they wanted 'everything.' Only if she tries to keep the mean between the radical 'everything or nothing' will Russia be able to obtain a good deal in a peaceful way.

Bulgaria's position towards Turkey is a very peculiar one; still, I believe that so long as Prince Alexander rules in Bulgaria it will be possible to maintain really good relations, notwithstanding many a difficulty. With the exception of England, Turkey alone has met Bulgaria during the events of the last year with indulgence, at times with benevolence; and under the influence of this attitude a pronounced *rapprochement* has taken place between the Sultan and Prince Alexander, between the Turks and the Bulgarians. In reality it was the interests they had in common which principally brought this about, and to

have created such a situation is a true masterpiece of Russian diplomacy. It is well known at Sofia that Turkey does not dream of disturbing the free development of Bulgaria, and the gentle yoke of Turkish suzerainty is felt very little or not at all. At Constantinople again it is a well-recognised fact that for any measurable space of time Bulgarian politics will have no other object in view than the maintenance of the country's liberties, which can be threatened by no other state but Russia. And that is why the Turks can to-day look upon the State which Russia once upon a time created herself, so that it might furnish the van of her army for an advance against Turkey, as a rampart against Russia. Certainly dark spots between Turkey and Bulgaria are not wanting, and the most serious of these is Macedonia, inhabited as it is in part by Bulgarians. It is universally known that the Bulgarians cherish the hope of some day taking possession of this Turkish province; but it is equally certain that all politicians in Bulgaria are agreed, after the events of this last year, to look upon the acquisition of Macedonia as a purely platonic desire. If the Ottoman Empire can no longer maintain itself in Europe, and if a partition of its European property takes place, Bulgaria will undoubtedly put forward her claims to Macedonia; but certainly the provocation for such a partition will not come from the Bulgarians, nor will they further any movement which has that object in view.

Bulgaria can reasonably have only one aim—to develop and strengthen herself by peaceful labour. As for the rest she is young enough to be able to wait.

If Bulgaria succeeds in warding off the danger of foreign interference, her internal development in the future, under Prince Alexander's rule, can very well be foreseen. Neither will those be right who think that the Prince will now throw himself into the arms of radical visionaries, nor yet those who pretend to believe in a reaction towards a more or less absolute régime. I daresay that the parliamentary government of the country will not always proceed with even steadiness; there will be difficulties as in other countries, but there is the greatest probability that party warfare will not break out again with such destructive passion as it sometimes did before the war. There are three reasons in favour of this assumption, every one of which would probably be sufficient to prevent a recurrence of former conditions. Firstly, the Russians will no longer set the different parties against each other, or, if they should still do so, they will not obtain the same results as formerly, when it was principally they who made and unmade ministers. Secondly, a change in Bulgaria's political life will probably take place so far as one can expect an approach between the political parties. The Radicals, who are now at the helm under Karaweloff, have become much more moderate in course of time, and will therefore not meet with the same opposition

from the Conservatives as formerly. Joint labour during the war has drawn the parties closer together, hard times have taught them a more just appreciation of the nature and meaning of a state's rights and duties, and the really great and difficult questions now before the National Assembly will, it may be hoped, have for result that the deputies will also take up a higher standpoint and will leave off their petty and ridiculous squabbles. By this I do not mean to say that Bulgaria will henceforth possess a model parliament, but that certainly a decided progress for the better will be apparent in comparison to formerly. But one can especially hope for this, as Prince Alexander's position—and that is the third reason—has become a very different one. Prince Alexander, torn hither and thither by factions, persecuted by Russia, already possessed great popularity amongst the people before the war; still to the masses he was not known as the man that he is. His bold and determined defence of the national idea, his indefatigable and clever guidance of the country's policy, finally and above all the victories which surrounded Prince, army, and country with a halo of glory, have completely altered that. If there were palaces in Bulgaria I would say that Prince Alexander, from the hut to the palace, was the most popular man of his country. Since he proved that he *can* govern, the Bulgarians, who were formerly crazy on the subject of pure parliamentary government, no longer deny him the

right of co-operation; they all recognise how justified his influence is, and I believe that it will have the greatest weight with the representatives of the people in future parliamentary discussions. The Prince's will, which has grown in strength and power; still more the attitude of the Mahomedans during the war, and the brotherhood of arms, sealed with their blood, between them and the Bulgarians, will have the further result of allowing the religious creeds and races, instead of rending and tearing each other, in the future to live peacefully side by side. The discontinuance of Russian agitations, the unity of the National Assembly for higher patriotic aims, a strengthening of Prince Alexander's influence—these are the reasons why one can look forward to the future development of Bulgaria's internal policy with a certain degree of assurance.

If one observes with a careful eye all that has taken place in Bulgaria since the Turkish rule, all that has been achieved towards increasing the prosperity and towards the practical improvement of the condition of the population, it will not be difficult to arrive at a conclusion as to the further development of the country's interests. The first duty of a state, to safeguard the lives and properties of its citizens, by means of a good and impartial administration of justice, has been very well understood in Bulgaria, and under that head the present conditions show an enormous improvement on those during the Turkish rule. It is not absolutely faultless,

and especially in cases of disputes between Bulgarians and non-Bulgarians, the Bulgarian judges have not always shown complete impartiality. The manner also of carrying out the sentences still leaves much to be desired and offers a wide field for reforms. However, the endeavour at improvement can be observed everywhere, and it seems to me that a people who are on the point of erecting a Palace of Justice as the greatest architectural ornament of their capital, show a proper appreciation of the importance of administering the law, and give a moral guarantee that they will in this emulate and follow the lead of more advanced nations.

The department which has been treated with the greatest affection is probably that of Public Instruction, for which all parties were ready to make the greatest pecuniary sacrifices. It is impossible to produce in eight years what has been neglected for centuries, but a commencement, viz. the erection of numerous elementary and higher class schools, has been made with astonishing energy. The carrying out of further plans, building of a National Museum (which has already been commenced), of a National Library, of a State Printing Office on a grand scale, were interrupted by the war, but will surely be taken in hand again shortly; equally so, the plan of instituting a University, which to begin with is to consist only of a chair for jurisprudence, medicine, and natural history. Agricultural Schools already exist, Commercial Schools are to be

founded—in short, a ceaseless activity is to be met with throughout that department, which opens up the very best prospects for the future.

The construction of new means of communication, the building of railways—which have hitherto not had their proper share of attention—will contribute towards bringing new and fresh life into the country, and not only in facilitating exports and imports, but also in creating industries, which the country cannot do without if it is really anxious to advance along the road of progress. Hitherto the Bulgarians have shown considerable distrust of the foreign capital necessary for this, and they themselves are to blame that so little has as yet been done in that direction. The universal sympathy which public opinion abroad showed the Bulgarians during the war, would have helped to destroy the prejudice against foreigners, if the attitude of the European Governments, opposed as it was to public opinion, had not unfortunately counteracted this result. All the same, I take the Bulgarians to be too practical not to see that their country, as matters stand, not only requires agriculture, but industries, which cannot be brought into life without help from abroad.

A great portion of her means and strength Bulgaria will have to devote to the completion of her military system, and it may be predicted that after the experiences of 1885, after the invasion by Servia, no Bulgarian will be blind to the necessity of creating an

army which would in future be able successfully to ward off all attacks. What shape the military organisation will take, and especially the question of officers, is still doubtful. This much is certain, and is also admitted by the Bulgarians, that the employment of foreign superior officers will be inevitable if the army is to be maintained at its present level. From what country, or whether they will be taken all from one country, depends on the course of politics in general.

In all branches of popular life we see progress, a good start which justifies the belief that matters will improve yet more in the future. In only one department such an improvement is no longer necessary, that of the finances, which is so admirably organised that it might serve as a pattern to many a European State.

I dare to hope that the gloomy picture of a Russian viceroyalty will not be realised, but that it will be given to Bulgaria to achieve a prosperous development as a free National State, in peace and unity with her neighbours under her tried ruler. I hope so for the sake of Bulgaria and her Prince, who are so closely united by their fights and victories that a dissolution seems almost impossible; but I also hope so for the sake of Europe, whose sorely needed peace will be better safeguarded by a national Bulgarian State in the Balkans than by an advance of Russia to the Mediterranean. A young unknown people has shown an amount of vitality which astonished all the world, and

which gave it the right to national existence; a wise manly Prince has brought the German name to high renown in the far East as a statesman and a general, and has shown himself worthy of the crown which the chance of his birth and choice has placed on his head. What has been done in Bulgaria, by Prince and people, has a greater claim to the general sympathy of public opinion than those sinister plans of obstinate ambition before which European diplomacy bows down for passing political reasons. Those nations, however, who once, like Bulgaria, staked the best they possessed for the attainment of national unity, those nations who know what foreign rule means, ought to be able to put themselves in the place of a people which is only fighting for its national liberty, embodied as it is in the person of its Prince.

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